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In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities

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In the late 1960s, Black students at predominantly White colleges and universities reevaluated the education they received. Influenced by the emerging Black Power movement, they sought to make their institutions more receptive to their needs, representative of their culture, and relevant to their situation as Blacks in America. However, many institutions were slow to change or were resistant. This article documents the support systems Black students created to ensure their psychological and academic well-being at predominantly White institutions and examines how Black students of that era redefined what it meant to be a "successful" Black student.

INTRODUCTION

Black student activism at predominantly White institutions of higher education in the late 1960s and 1970s began as an active response to their situation. Not unlike Black students in predominantly White primary and secondary school settings, many Black college students felt alienated and disaffected from their new academic settings and experienced overt or veiled hostility from White classmates, faculty, and administrators. However, unlike younger children, Black college students were themselves able to force change at their respective institutions and help shape the nature, direction, and purpose of their postsecondary education. This article examines the influence of Black Power era students on the programs and policies at predominantly White colleges and universities (PWCUs). It begins with a brief history of Black educational efforts to highlight persistent and reoccurring themes. Next, it discusses the strategies and goals Black college students of the late 1960s and 1970s employed to ensure their psychological and academic survival at predominantly White institutions including the creation of Black student unions, Black Studies departments, Black cultural centers, and academic support services. These services, often initiated by the Black students themselves, were established to promote their greater retention, academic success, and resiliency at PWCUs. Finally, the article describes how Black students at these institutions redefined the notion of academic "success" consonant with the newly political nature of Black identity at the time, the shifting perceptions of what it meant to be a "Negro" or "Black," and the re-examination of traditional models of individual achievement. It examines how Black students merged notions of academic excellence and notions of social justice to generate new understandings about their roles, responsibilities, and rewards.

Of course, not all Black students participated in the protests that precipitated the institutionalization of support programs for Black students and other responses to the

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increasing Black presence on predominantly White campuses. However, many did participate to varying degrees. This article is concerned with those students who demanded that the campus climate, organizations, and curriculum be responsive to their reality as Blacks in America and took it upon themselves to establish within the nation's higher education system organizations and programs for that purpose.

The African American Postsecondary Experience: A Brief History

The African experience in the Americas has been fraught with social subordination, political repression, and economic exploitation. Though overtly discriminatory laws such as the Black Codes and other "Jim Crow" mandates have been stricken from the public record in the United States, African American subjugation persists, albeit in a more covert manner, but often with same insidious effects. Despite these barriers, African Americans throughout history have struggled for liberation using whatever tools they could obtain. Recognizing that education and subjugation cannot coexist, African Americans early identified education as one of the most valuable means by which to improve their standing in the U.S. (Watkins, 1993). They subsequently molded their educational initiatives and curricular approaches to respond as effectively as possible to social, political, and economic conditions that could, at best, be described as tenuous and, at worst, be viewed as unjust and inhumane. As a result, self-help, the creation of a leadership class, social and economic autonomy, and political advancement have been constant themes in Black educational initiatives.

African Americans have long recognized the value of literacy. During the slavery era, many African Americans viewed literacy in English as the pathway to freedom. Though their efforts to attain literacy were not illegal in the North, many African Americans residing above the Mason–Dixon Line attended schools that were racially segregated beginning as early as the primary grades. Blacks' attendance at predominantly White postsecondary institutions in the North was inconsiderable except at a few progressive institutions that did not employ creative methods to discourage African American enrollment. Regardless, African Americans persisted in their efforts to pursue equal opportunities in higher education. The first to successfully do so, John Russworm, received a bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College in 1826 (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996).

During the postbellum era, although Blacks were not overtly prohibited from receiving an education, Whites, when not directly thwarting African American educational progress, sought to determine the nature and purpose of schooling for Blacks. As a response, many African Americans resolved to take control of and re-orient their education to fit their specific needs and use it to achieve racial uplift. Thus, the freedmen and freedwomen, along with their allies and supporters from various sectors, established institutions of higher education that would enable them to defend and extend their hard-fought freedoms despite their subordinate status. In many cases, federal monetary aid facilitated the development of separate colleges for African Americans. Various White educational theorists and philanthropists attempted to derail the purpose of education as African Americans defined it, but, as Anderson (1998) notes, the former slaves and their descendants "persisted in their crusade to develop systems of education compatible with their resistance to racial and class subordination" (p. 3). Notwithstanding, the predominantly White colleges and universities (PWCUs) in the North and South remained, for all intents and purposes, closed to African Americans. From 1826 to 1890, only 30 African Americans graduated from these institutions. By 1910, the number remained under 700 (Feagin et al., 1996).

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The 1930s and 1940s exhibited a continuing pattern of almost complete segregation of the races in the realm of higher education. Whereas African Americans attempted to gain entrance to PWCUs, their efforts came to little avail. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision struck down the notion of separate-but-equal education for Whites, Blacks, and other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. The Court's decision spoke specifically to the unconstitutionality of educational discrimination and segregation, but it also had a wider influence on African American life in general: it renewed Black hopes and invigorated their struggles to gain broader liberation. Though directed at primary and secondary schools, *Brown* also lent credence to the attempts of Blacks seeking to enter historically White postsecondary institutions.

As a whole, however, northern PWCUs continued to exclude African American students from their campuses until the 1940s. PWCUs in border states rescinded many of their exclusionary policies in the 1950s. Not until the 1960s would historically White southern institutions of higher education admit African American students, and then only one by one and after intense resistance. Regardless of region, by 1954, only 4,000 college freshmen entering PWCUs nationwide were African American (Plaut, 1954).

Two pieces of federal legislation helped initiate changes in higher education opportunity and access for African Americans in the 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ordered a census of all U.S. postsecondary institutions identifying students by race or ethnicity, thereby dramatizing the low number of Black students at PWCUs. That legislation also warned administrators at these institutions that federal monies would be withheld from any institution found to be in noncompliance with the Act's equal opportunity mandates. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) expanded the number and types of financial assistance available to citizens pursuing higher education. Although the financial aid provided by the HEA was not limited to African American students, Blacks were the group that most benefited from the grants, low-interest loans, and work–study opportunities it created. Campus-based affirmative action initiatives also contributed to increased African American enrollments at PWCUs. According to Peterson et al. (1978), African American college student enrollment doubled between 1964 and 1970, with the greatest proportion of the increase noted at historically White institutions. By the early 1970s, approximately two-thirds of all African American college students attended PWCUs (Ballard, 1973; Peterson et al., 1978).

The increasing Black postsecondary enrollments coincided with the burgeoning Black Power movement of the 1970s. During that decade, many Black students on White campuses embraced the ideology of Black Power, which advocated Black unity, celebrated Black culture, and employed more aggressive tactics for gaining Black liberation from various forms of oppression (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). However, historically White institutions' acquiescence in admitting greater numbers of Black students did not translate into widespread social acceptance of those students. In many instances, Black students encountered racially hostile campus environments where White students, professors, and administrators openly challenged both their right to attend college as well as their intellectual abilities. In an effort to make these campus environments more hospitable and responsive to their needs, numerous Black students organized demonstrations against racist and discriminatory school policies and worked to create social and academic support systems whose goals was to help ensure their survival and success at PWCUs.

According to a study sponsored by the American Council on Education, Black students were involved in 57% of all campus protests at predominantly White postsecondary institutions during the 1968–69 academic year (Bayer & Astin, 1971). A study conducted by the Urban Research Corporation (1970) found that in the first half of 1969, Black students were involved in 51% of campus protests at both PWCUs and historically Black

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institutions of higher learning, though they accounted for less than 6% of the total college population. Despite their modest numbers overall and the fact that many campuses had only a small number of activist Black students, many African American college students fought institutionalized racism on campus and carved a niche for themselves at PWCUs.

It is within the context of this history of African American educational efforts that the challenges facing the Black college students who attended historically White institutions of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s will be examined. These students' attempts to alleviate their alienation, facilitate their resiliency, increase their retention, enhance their chances of school success, and make education more relevant to the Black experience will be shown to follow in a long tradition of similar efforts. Indeed, the challenges that sizable numbers of Black students encountered in the 1960s and 1970s were similar to those faced by their predecessors, who also often encountered opposition from White collegiate administrators, faculty, and students. Subsequently, these students of but a generation ago also viewed their struggle as a means of uplifting the race and identified education as a tool for dismantling oppression and charting Black progress. Like their forebears, they too heralded education as the pathway to freedom.

Efforts to Promote the Psychological and Emotional Well-being of Black Students at PWCUs

Many Black students experienced a sense of alienation when they arrived at PWCUs in the early to middle 1960s (Exum, 1985; Feagin et al., 1996; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998). The small number of Black students on any given campus contributed to this sense of isolation. One student reported feeling as if she were being "being drowned in a sea of Whiteness" (personal communication, November 1997).[1] Several other Black students indicated that they did not feel welcome to participate in student life and organizations such as fraternities and sororities, student government, or academic associations. Rather than feeling that they were members of an inclusive institutional body, Black students described feeling more like appendages that were to be tolerated but not integrated into the whole. Overt hostility from various members of the majority student body, faculty, staff, and administration exacerbated this sense of alienation and sometimes led to Black students' heightened emotional distress and isolation (Feagin et al., 1996; McCormick, 1990; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998; Willie & McCord, 1972). Although the increased enrollments of Black students at PWCUs during the late 1960s alleviated some of the numerical alienation, the lack of a sense of belonging and persistent racial hostility on majority-White campuses continued. Black students often sought to protect and promote their physical, psychological, and emotional health and well-being through the development of three entities to be discussed in the following sections: Black student unions, Black Studies departments, and separate campus facilities.

Black Student Unions

Black student alienation at PWCUs, coupled with a growing racial consciousness among Blacks nationwide due to the spread of the Black Power movement, influenced the rise of Black student unions. Black students began organizing these groups on PWCU campuses during the late 1960s. They went by many names—Black Students' Association, African American Students' Society, and United Afro-American Students, among them—

[1]The former students whose comments are noted at various points throughout this article were interviewed by the author as part of her dissertation study and will remain anonymous.

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but all were "geared to provide Black students with a solid, legitimate power base from which they can bring about needed changes in the colleges and universities involved" (Edwards, 1970, p. 61). According to Exum (1985), regardless of the university setting, Black student unions shared many traits and goals in common. For the most part, he noted, they were "exclusively Black in membership, monolithic in appearance, highly self-conscious, and motivated by sociopolitical concerns" (p. 42). Furthermore, most were formed for the explicit purpose of creating solidarity and unity among Black students and other people of African ancestry, expressing positive aspects of Black culture, and forcing significant change in the university or college campuses on which they were located.

For example, Black students at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC) began discussing the need for an exclusively Black student organization in early 1967. In a January 1967 edition of the student newspaper, *The Daily Illini,* a Black student posed the formation of an advocacy organization in an article entitled "Encourage Negroes to Form Racial Pride":

> [It is] a sort of ad-hoc committee of Negro students. It's not a civil rights group, not a social group either, but a sort of superordinate organization which would represent all Negroes on campus, sort of like a funnel to represent all the variant opinions of Negroes on campus, and a vehicle to which the white power structure can address itself. (unnumbered page)

Other Black students at UIUC shared this student's views. As individuals and groups began discussing the possibilities, they realized a common thread and joined together to create a forum for discussion, a political pressure group, and an agitating body called the Black Students Association in October 1967. The organization adopted the motto, "We hope for nothing; we demand everything," linked itself to the emerging Black Power Movement, and declared itself the principal organization through which Black UIUC students would force the university administration to recognize and act on Black concerns.

Similarly, McCormick (1990) describes how Black students at Rutgers University's Newark, New Jersey, campus recognized the need to create an organization to promote their issues in September 1967. That year, Black Rutgers students interested in forcing change at the institution and promoting the welfare of the surrounding African American community joined the campus chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, several of the students decided that the NAACP did not sufficiently reflect their values and goals. A month later, they formed the Black Organization of Students (BOS) at Rutgers. As a Black former student active on the campus during the 1960s explained, "We as idealistic young people felt that the NAACP had served a useful purpose. . .but now it was time to move forward" (McCormick, 1990, p. 17). The BOS became a buffer between Rutgers's Black students and their institution, which, according to an article in the *Rutgers Observer*, Black students perceived as a "ridiculous, sorrowful, pitiful, and arrogant urban [university]" (p. 35).

Exum (1985) cites six critical services provided by Black student unions, which, he claims,

(1) met social, psychological, and academic needs not being met through traditional university mechanisms;
(2) provided a safe forum for the exploration of identity issues;
(3) enabled the development of collective Black student values and ideological beliefs;
(4) helped develop a sense of collective competence and ability;
(5) enabled collective action and behavior on issues relevant to Black students; and
(6) provided a training ground for the development of political organization, participation, and leadership.

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Willie and McCord (1972) concur, noting that Black student unions provided Black students at PWCUs with a mutually supportive peer group for ensuring their psychological and emotional health and a forum for discussing issues relevant to themselves and the Black community.

Despite their honorable intentions, many Black student unions reported limited membership in the early stages of their existence. Black students at various campuses attributed increased union membership and politicization to the April 1968 assassination of civil rights movement leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Exum, 1985; Feagin et al., 1996; Williamson, 1998). With their enlarged memberships and the adoption of the Black Power ideology and political spirit, these organizations began pursuing their mission—changing their respective institutions to fit their notions of a proper education and campus environment—in earnest. Black students' demands echoed from universities across the nation. At San Francisco State College, New York University's University College, Cornell University, the University of California–Los Angeles, Northwestern University, Ohio State, Wayne State, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and many other PWCUs, these demands often included calls for the recruitment and retention of more Black students and faculty, the creation of Black Studies departments, and the designation of separate campus facilities for Black students. Many demands spoke directly to the need to alleviate the alienation experienced by Black students at PWCUs, provide them with alternative social outlets, and make their postsecondary education more relevant to their situation as Blacks in the United States.

Black Studies Departments

In fall 1966, the members of the Black Student Union at San Francisco State College (SFSC) demanded the creation of a Department of Black Studies at that institution. In 1969, their vision became a reality. Black students at SFSC endeavored to make the Black Studies department a manifestation of the Black Power ideology and the new concept of Blackness. Just as this emerging concept was growing beyond the mere recognition of pigment—its proponents insisted that persons of African descent had to be Black on the "inside," or identify with their race intellectually and emotionally, as well as the "outside"—the designers of the new department insisted that it too had to have Blackness at its core. As Nathan Hare (1969), the department's first director, maintained: "If all a black-studies program needs is a professor with a black skin to prattle about Negro subject matter, then our Negro schools would never have failed so painfully as they have" (p. 234).

The demand for Black Studies spread to other predominantly White campuses across the nation in the later 1960s (Exum, 1985; Long, 1970; McCormick, 1990; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998). Wary of student protests, succumbing to political pressure, and mindful of community backlash, several administrations hastily began creating Black Studies programs of their own. By 1971, there were over five hundred such departments and programs at PWCUs across the nation (Sims, 1978).

Black students, faculty, and administrators worked to infuse Black Studies with the Black Power ideology. As a result, Harding (1970) maintains, the Black postsecondary experience and Black politics were inextricably linked to the fight for Black liberation. For the most part, collegiate Black Studies departments assumed no neutrality in their role in this struggle. They were "proudly, openly pro-Black and recognized predominantly white universities as part of the American political structure" (Harding, 1970, p. iv). Many who were involved in the establishment and operation of Black Studies programs did not view a college education as an instrument by which to socialize young adults into the dominant culture. Instead, they saw the postsecondary experience as serving an openly

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political purpose and as an instrument with which oppressed peoples could learn to change society. As Colon (1980) contended, the purpose of Black Studies was threefold: (a) corrective, to counter distortions, misperceptions, and fallacies surrounding Black people; (b) descriptive, to accurately depict the past and present events constituting the Black experience; and (c) prescriptive, to educate Black students who would eventually uplift the race. He further described Black Studies as a self-help tool that enables Black students to go back to their communities and assume leadership roles, and as an expression of Black autonomy that enables Blacks to determine the direction and nature of education for themselves, though within a White campus context.

Black students' demands for Black Studies programs at PWCUs substantiate Watkins's (1993) assertion of a link between the sociohistorical context of the United States and African American educational efforts. On the heels of the civil rights movement, many African Americans became disillusioned with the pace of change. Toward the later 1960s, more aggressive means and tactics were examined and employed in the struggle for liberation. Concurrently, African Americans redefined Black identity as political and adopted the ideology of Black Power. Such sentiments filtered into, and were partly defined by, Black students on predominantly White campuses. The demands for Black Studies should also be contextualized in the larger educational debate regarding the relevance of higher education and the redefinition of education. For instance, during this same era, White students working through groups such as the Peace and Freedom Party and Students for a Democratic Society helped to redefine the role of the university in U.S. society by questioning the presence of military recruiters on campus, advocating the right of political dissent, and demonstrating against university complicity in the Vietnam War effort (Gitlin, 1987; McEvoy & Miller, 1969). Therefore, the call for Black Studies reflected the influence of the broader American context, broader educational initiatives, and persistent African American educational themes including the improvement of educational experiences and outcomes.

Separate Campus Facilities for Black Students

> It is not only desirable that we have separate living and eating facilities, it is imperative if we are to survive in this society. We must have the chance to appreciate our own kind and our own culture. (Black SFSC student, quoted in Edwards, 1970, p. 98)

Many Black students at PWCUs across the country echoed the above statement and demanded separate residence halls, classrooms, and cafeterias for Blacks only. A few institutions complied. At Rutgers University's New Brunswick campus, Black students demanded and received a "Black section" in one of the residence halls on campus (McCormick, 1990). With university sanction, Black male students at Cornell University established an all-Black male residence hall, Elmwood House, in 1966. The next year, Black Cornell women established WARI, an all-Black female residence hall (Strout & Grossvogel, 1970). Most institutions refused to establish separate residences or cafeterias, claiming that the provision of separate services and benefits based on race or ethnicity violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Nonetheless, many PWCUs supported the creation of Black cultural centers on their campuses. Typically, these centers, or "Black houses," as many were called, were designated for use by Black students of the respective institutions, and often by Black nonstudent residents of the surrounding university communities. The primary purposes of the centers were to promote the exaltation and exploration of Black culture and the Black aesthetic, and to provide Black students and other Black campus personnel with a safe haven—a place where they could escape the pressures of university life and engage with other Blacks in mutually supportive peer groups. Black cultural centers at PWCUs became

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places where workshops, lectures, musical and dramatic performances, literary events, and dances were held, and where Black student organizations were headquartered. A former UIUC student remembered the psychological and emotional support offered by such cultural centers:

> You could go [there] and you didn't feel like you were being beat-up on by the university. Every place else you went had such a negative situation. At least for that hour, you felt like you were in a positive situation where people were reinforcing whatever needs you had. (personal communication, August 1997)

Black cultural centers at PWCUs often housed these campuses' Black student newspapers. As Walker (1976) and Williamson (1998) point out, many Black students at majority-White institutions considered mainstream campus newspapers a biased and often racist source of information and as controlled by White students. To provide their own outlet for voicing their concerns and issues, Black students at Rutgers initiated the *Black Voice* newspaper. Black students at New York University's University College initiated *Black News*. In St. Louis, Missouri, Black Washington University students published *Black Talk*, while Black students at Cornell published the literary magazine, *Watu*. Such publications were important vehicles for the dissemination of Black Power ideology and rhetoric on PWCU campus across the nation. These publications also facilitated both organizational and personal aims. Black student unions used the publications as forums to discuss organizational business, advertise upcoming social events, make demands of the administration, and offer alternative interpretations of campus unrest. Individual Black students used the newspapers as a means of self-expression by contributing opinion pieces, prose, poetry, and book/media reviews. The creation of Black student publications provided the Black students a forum and offered further psychological and tangible validation of their thoughts and opinions.

Efforts to Promote the Academic Well-being of Black Students at PWCUs

As discussed previously, the increased number of Black students at PWCUs in the late 1960s and early 1970s somewhat relieved the sense of isolation and alienation these students typically experienced. However, several Black students expressed doubts about their universities' commitments to Black student retention, worried about their lack of academic preparation relative to their White peers, and were painfully aware of the difference between enrolling in a predominantly White institution and receiving a degree from one (Exum, 1985; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998). Hostile classroom climates compounded their reservations about the academy's dedication to diversity. Walker hypothesizes that racially polarized teacher–pupil relationships and classroom discomfort, compounded by racial tension among and between students, were negative factors in the college experiences of Black students during this era. These factors had an additionally damaging effect on Black students' formal educational processes. Indeed, Black students at PWCUs during the 1960s and 1970s often recognized their precarious academic status on campus and sought academic support. Some universities offered no academic support services for their newly enrolled Black students; others offered such services to varying degrees. Black students also took it upon themselves to ensure their own and each other's academic survival by initiating academic support services such as tutoring networks, informal academic advising, and departmental organizations on PWCU campuses. These services and their impacts on Black college students' academic well-being will be discussed in the following sections.

Tutorial Services

Several PWCUs provided academic support services targeting their newly enrolled African American students. For instance, in the late 1970s, the Washington University

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School of Engineering Committee on Black Concerns sent a letter to then-Chancellor William Danforth regarding the establishment of a tutoring service in the School of Engineering. The service was to be open to all students, but it was anticipated that "its heaviest use would be by Black engineering students and foreign engineering students" (Danforth, 1978, p. 203). Students with academic difficulties made appointments to see a tutor, usually a graduate or undergraduate student taking the same course. Tutoring services also were established for other disciplines. For example, New York University's University College established its Educational Support Program, a two-year pre-college program that offered tutorials, workshops, and other educational support services. The program was staffed by upper-division students who served as teaching assistants, counseling assistants, and tutors (Exum, 1985). However, the establishment of tutorial services at PWCUs did not necessarily translate into a successful tutoring program. Many Black students remained wary of institutional attempts to help them via such programs, often citing as deterrents the condescending attitudes of those to whom they appealed for help (Exum, 1985).

Black students at several predominantly White institutions also created their own informal tutoring services paralleling university services (McCormick, 1990; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998). The pairing of tutor and tutee was a much less formal process than that of university services, and usually involved more experienced students in tutoring less experienced students. However, such efforts often proved more successful (Williamson, 1998). Black students enrolled in the same course at the same time frequently formed study groups to discuss complicated concepts, complete homework assignments, and prepare for exams. Such tutoring and study group efforts revealed a dedication to group rather than individual survival. These students' determination to help each other also reflects the African American educational themes of self-help and autonomy.

Academic Advising

Most PWCUs provided academic counseling to all of their students by the late 1960s, and students generally had access to vital academic information such as departmental requirements, career alternatives, and graduation prerequisites through their academic advisors. However, many administrators and faculty at these institutions believed that the Black students who arrived en masse in the late 1960s necessitated "special" advising. Accordingly, they created centers and services for the newly enrolled Black students. Many Black students resisted these efforts, however. As one PWCU dean noted to the dean of his institution's affirmative action program in a July 3, 1970, memo:

> At times, there appears to be an almost suicidal determination [on the part of Black students] to make it on [their] own. . . .Perhaps it is a matter of black pride; perhaps it is a matter of distrust of us; perhaps it is an unwillingness to cooperate with an establishment which has been less than kindly disposed toward them in the past. (Educational Opportunities File, 1964–77, unnumbered page)

The interpretation of Black student resistance to university support attempts as "suicidal determination" or "black pride" misses the mark for many of the Black PWCU students of that day. If Black students did not take greater advantage of university-sponsored programs, the administration of which was often were rife with patronizing overtones, did not mean they considered their college efforts to be individual endeavors or that they allowed Black Power ideology to interfere with their academics. Instead, many of these Black students initiated informal academic advising networks among themselves. As Walker (1976) maintains, Black students at Washington University in the 1960s and 1970s often engaged in such activities. Whereas the university offered counseling services and provided information on courses and departmental requirements to all students, its Black students generally avoided such services and attributed little value to

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information received from the non-Black counselors. Instead, they developed an "underground advisement system" wherein upper-division Black students offered lower-division students information on teachers' racial and other attitudes, course content, and advice on manipulating situational variables to their academic advantage. Although students are not always the best sources of information in many cases, this Black student network offered a valuable alternative.

Departmental Organizations

Black student-initiated support services often were institutionalized in the form of departmental organizations such as campus-based chapters of the Black Pre-Law Society, the National Society of Black Engineers, and the Association of Future Black Social Workers. Many of these organizations offered tutoring services, course advice, peer support groups, and social outlets. During the 1960s and 1970s, Black students generally gravitated to such groups since many experienced hostility from their White classmates, remained isolated in classrooms, and felt alienated from professors. These organizations not only served Black PWCU students' academic needs and helped quell their fears of academic failure but also provided these students with opportunities to reify their resolve to succeed. The organizations also helped many Black students at PWCUs to feel connected to the larger university. They further demonstrated that although Black students may not have participated widely in university-sponsored support programs, they were interested in efforts aimed at ensuring their academic survival, resiliency, and well-being. Black departmental organizations spoke directly to their concerns. Upperclassmen used the organizations to equip their ill-prepared peers with vital information and strategies for success. Bolstered by their peers at organizational meetings, Black students could return to classrooms with important scholastic information as well as a renewed spirit and sense of confidence.

Redefining the "Successful" Black Student

The African American educational themes of racial uplift, self-help, and the creation of future leaders tangibly manifested themselves in the form of Black student unions, Black Studies, cultural centers, and academic support programs in the 1960s and 1970s. Less tangibly, these themes were reflected in the redefinitions of Black student success that evolved during these decades. These new notions mirrored the shift between African American students' acceptance of the traditional educational perspective predominant in the 1950s and early 1960s and their acceptance of the alternative educational perspective, which predominated in the later 1960s and early 1970s and was influenced heavily by the Black Power movement.

Walker (1976) defines the traditional educational perspective as "preparation for societal functioning, orientation toward academic excellence and orientation toward traditional values of society—preservation of the status quo" (pp. 206–207). Similarly, Spring (1973) identifies schools as the primary agency through which social control and cohesion are promoted and youth are imbued with codes of conduct and social values that help ensure the stability of the status quo. Predominantly White institutions of higher education reflected this ethos through the courses they offered, the promotion of competitiveness and individualism, the type and structure of their student organizations, the perpetuation of status-quo theories and world views, and through their institutional structures. A successful student in such a context focused on academics, got along with his or her classmates, participated in campus life through various student organizations, and, above all, did not "buck the system" but accepted the authority of professors and administrators.

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The purpose of higher education in this view was to generate middle-class Americans with middle-class (that is, White) values who accepted the existing social order.

Prior to the late 1960s, Black students attending PWCUs often followed this prescription and subjugated their racial group concerns to their individual survival while on campus (Ballard, 1973). This is not to say that these earlier college students were not interested in racial advancement and liberation. Indeed, many interpreted their individual success as a cog in the wheel of collective racial uplift. However, Black college students attending historically White institutions prior to the 1960s often *had* to be concerned primarily with their individual survival either because they were the only Black student on campus or one of a few, or because the intensely hostile campus climate necessitated an emphasis on individual survival concerns. Remembering his own experience as one of two Black students at Kenyon College in the 1960s, Ballard (1973) notes: "We were, in fact, forced to suppress our natural inner selves so as to conform to the mores of a campus dominated by upper-middle-class Americans. For eighteen hours a day, our manners, speech, style of walking were on trial before white America" (p. 4). Subsequently, many Black students did not decry the racism inherent in their treatment on White campuses, nor did they dispute the racist assumptions of PWCUs' institutional structures and curricula. Rather, they tended to see themselves as students first and African Americans second (Ballard, 1973; Williamson, 1998).

During the late 1960s, Black students increasingly viewed the struggle for social justice as consistent with their personal aspirations for occupational success and a better life. An alternative educational ideology emerged parallel to the burgeoning Black Power ideology, one that included "preservation of Black identity, preference for practical or culturally relevant education, orientation toward collective Black goals of social advancement, [and] social change objectives" (Walker, 1976, p. 206). Consequently, the shift in educational ideology resonated in the redefinition of the successful Black student as one who excelled in academics and had clear career goals but who also fully participated in the Black student movement and the Black Power movement. This "new" successful Black student was committed to the welfare of all Black students. Black student unions, Black Studies departments, and Black departmental organizations embodied this alternative ideology by encouraging and supporting academic success as well as reaffirming racial identity and providing students with the tools they needed to attack and reform racist systems of domination.

Beyond the campus, successful Black students were expected to work for the collective good of the Black community. They were also expected to evidence their dedication to Black community uplift by demanding increased PWCU outreach to Black communities, more occupational opportunities for Black community residents on PWCU campuses, the establishment of institutionally sponsored Black cultural centers located in the Black community, and greater access to the institution by Black community residents—all of which came to pass in the 1960s and 1970s. When their respective universities refused to provide outreach services to Black communities, Black students who were successful in this light often initiated their own programs including tutorial services for primary and secondary school children (Walker, 1976); mentoring services for younger children and teens (Walker, 1976; Williamson 1998); and cultural activities such as poetry workshops, dance workshops, and various heritage-affirming courses (Williamson, 1998).

Gurin and Epps (1975) have noted this shift in educational ideology in their pioneering study of Black students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States. Their study demonstrates that Black college students' commitment to collective identity and political action on one hand, and their commitment to individual achievement and career success on the other, were not necessarily mutually exclusive or at

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opposite poles. Instead, these goals were merely "independent of each other" (p. 350). In other words, Black students could be committed to individual concerns as well as to social change. Indeed, the Black student who most effectively combined the two was viewed as most successful. Exum (1985) contends that this conclusion appeared to be equally true for Black students attending predominantly White institutions in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

At least two additional concepts of Black college student success that emerged during this era should be considered. One definition held that the successful Black student was the opposite of a "sell-out": a Black person who befriended or dated Whites, subscribed to a philosophy of integration and assimilation, and/or did not participate in Black student-sponsored events (Napper, 1973). By contrast, the successful Black student was well-rounded, respected by other Black students on campus, socially aware, and academically fit. He or she conformed to the physical, psychological, and behavioral conceptions of Blackness and then translated those concepts into activism on campus. As a Black former UIUC student recalled: "Your academic success wasn't what you were measured by, it was your participation in relevant things" (personal communication, August 1997). However, Black UIUC students saw enough value in academics to print the names of all the Black students who received at least a "B" average in the October 13, 1969, edition of their newspaper, *The Black Rap*, and congratulate them on their success (Black Student Association Publications, 1967–). Black students at New York University's University College also linked academics and social responsibility. In a September 1968 edition of the campus newspaper, *Heights Daily News*, a University College Black Student Union officer described the purpose of the organization as follows: "Our main job will be to keep [the new freshmen] here for four years, have them graduate and go back into the Black Community and help build it up" (Exum, 1985, p. 61).

Another emerging definition of Black student success in the 1960s and 1970s helped Black students resolve the dissonance between practicing Black Power ideology and attending a predominantly White college or university. A popular question for Black students of the day was: Why do you attend a predominantly White institution of higher learning instead of an historically Black one if you feel more comfortable with separate activities and do not perceive White institutions as supportive? The answers to this question varied. On one hand, most Black students recognized the prestige and academic reputation of White institutions as attractive and beneficial for their future career pursuits (Feagin et al., 1996; Walker, 1976; Williamson, 1998). On the other hand, they saw it as their duty to force those institutions to reflect Black understandings of a proper education and create an environment where Black students could thrive. Further, these students sought to share the benefits of the excellent education PWCUs had to offer with the Black communities from which they came and to which they would return as leaders in racial uplift. Thus, like many of their predecessors, Black students of the 1960s and 1970s believed their individual achievement enabled group advancement.

Conclusion

To varying degrees, the products of Black Power-era Black students' efforts to ensure their survival and success at PWCUs remain intact. Black student unions, Black Studies departments, Black cultural centers, and academic support systems targeting Black PWCU students continue to draw a number of participants. One possible explanation for the persistence of such programs and organizations is that Black students continue to be disadvantaged on White campuses relative to their White peers and continue to suffer from isolation, alienation, and lack of support (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991). At predomi-

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nantly White institutions through the mid-1980s, for example, Exum (1985) reveals that Black students made many demands similar to those of the Black students of the late 1960s: increased Black student admissions, more recruitment of Black faculty, more financial aid and support programs, and the resolution of episodes of open bigotry or racism on PWCU campuses. Today, the activist possibilities of Black student unions, coupled with the persistent alienation and disaffection of Blacks from White-dominated U.S. society and its institutions of higher education, have led to renewed Black student activism (Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Williamson, 1998).

There is much that Blacks currently attending PWCUs can learn from their predecessors of 30 and 40 years ago that will help them continue to work inside the system for programs and policies that will ensure the success of those Black students who will follow in their footsteps. As history has demonstrated, Black college students' resolve to determine independently the type, nature, and purpose of education that they will receive has not diminished. Until White institutions demonstrate a concerted commitment to Black students and their academic and psychological survival, Black students will endeavor to create such an environment—in defense of themselves.

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