HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Spring '72
1) Composition of African-American Studies Committee:
   Prof. Fredrickson, Prof. Graham, Prof. Paden, Prof.
   Stuckey, Prof. Leslie, Prof. Legesse; students participating off and on:
   Arnold, Kwesi, Melvin, Freddy, Al Schexnneider, Phil Dixon, L. Grisham.

2) Selection of Lerone Bennett as chairman

Summer '72
3) Internal bickering over:
   (A.) Vitaas for potential candidates of the dept.
   (B.) joint appointments
   (C.) availability of the new chairman
   (D.) Mari Evans-members claimed Lerone tricked them about
        Mari.

4) Resignation of Lerone citing ill health.

5) Acting Director(s) of the Dept.
   (A.) Joshua Leslie
   (B.) Sterling Stuckey

Fall '72
6) Cincinnati Trip to Conference
   (A.) availability of materials

7) November 14, 1972 Meeting between Lerone Bennett, Joshua L.
    Sterling S., students, black faculty. Also Jan Carew was
    present. Lots of things brought out: (a) real reason for
    Lerone leaving, (b) several attacks went on between Lerone
    and Bobby vs. Josh and Sterling.

8) Meeting between FMO and Raymond Mack concerning real reason
    Lerone left. At this meeting he promised to contact Lerone;
    meanwhile students held dorm meetings to show support of
    Lerone, 400 signatures collected to ask Lerone to come back.

9) Failure of Mack to do as he promised. So, mass meeting was
    held, after which all who attended marched on President Strotz's
    House and presented him with (a) proposal concerning African-
    American Studies Dept. (b) letter stating position of students
    and their intention to hold press conference if there was re-
    sponse to our proposal by Friday, Nov. 29, 1972 at 12 Noon.
    Date of this incidence was Wed. Nov. 27, 1972.

10) Press Conference Nov. 29, 1972

Winter '73
11) Meeting with Strotz and Grey-Dean of CAS.

12) Appointment of Jan Carew without student input.

13) Meeting with Jan Carew

14) Mass meeting to discuss tactics from here.

Spring '73
15) Implementation of Boycott and Alternative Program.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT
continued

16) Ridicule from Carew, Stuckey, Leslie etc. concerning Boycott.


18) Mass Meeting to discuss continuation of a Boycott

19) End of school year

Summer '73

20) Various appointments made in the Dept. without knowledge of the Black Student Community.

21) Contact with some of these people who were appointed

Fall '73

22) New Student Week

23) Meeting with Dept. on ending its isolation from Black Student Community.
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
REBECCA CROWN CENTER
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

VICE PRESIDENT
AND
DEAN OF FACULTIES

(312) 492-5117
August 5, 1971

To: Executive Committee, F.M.O.
619 Emerson Street
Evanston Campus

From: Raymond W. Mack

Thank you for your constructive letter of July 27. Let me try to reply point by point.

As far as I am concerned, you are wrong in assuming that there exists any "delight in the myth of disunity and fragmentation among black students." The only organization with which I am consulting concerning the needs and desires of black students at Northwestern is F.M.O. You are correct that there is no further need to discuss this question.

As to the real issues, I am prepared to take before the Northwestern Board of Trustees at its fall meeting the motion passed on May 5, 1970, by the College of Arts and Sciences faculty: "Be it moved that the College of Arts and Sciences establish a Department of Afro-American Studies that would not offer a major for a degree, effective the beginning of the academic year 1970-71." I am prepared to explain to the Trustees that my office is ready to move on this resolution as a matter of sound and innovative educational policy, that we intend to build a Department of such quality that it serves as a national model, that we want to appoint a Chairman as soon as we can recruit a scholar with the stature and sense of commitment to build such a Department, and that we intend to be in business by the fall quarter of 1972.

Dean Nobles has suggested that the most sensible way to constitute a Search Committee is to utilize the Afro-American Studies Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences and to charge them with the task of bringing in a slate of candidates for Chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies. The Afro-American Studies Committee is elected by the College faculty upon the recommendation of the Dean and the Committee on Committees. I shall transmit to the Dean of the College and to the College Committee on Committees my recommendation that they accept the nominations made in your letter of June 14, 1971, and transmit to them your recommendation that it would be desirable for the majority of the members of the Committee to be Afro-American faculty members, students, and administrators.
I know most of the people you suggest as potential Chairmen, and I am very pleased at the quality level represented by this list. When the Afro-American Studies Committee has been elected, I shall convey your suggestions to them. I am sure that as a Search Committee they will give serious consideration to any candidates recommended by F.M.O.

You are certainly correct that, if we are to work toward the best Department of Afro-American Studies in the country, we shall have to have an impressive library collection. I am transmitting your recommendation on this to our new Librarian, Mr. McGowan.

I am glad that you are developing both a blueprint for our proposed Department and guidelines for the recruitment of a Chairman and faculty members. I hope to hear from you soon on both these matters.

RWM:JT
Copies to Executive Committee members
Freddye Hill
L. H. Nobles
John McGowan
Dr. Raymond Mack  
Vice President and Dean of Faculty  
Rebecca Crown Center  
Northwestern University  
Evanston, Ill. 60201

July 27, 1971

Dear Dr. Mack:

This letter is in response to your informal meeting with several representatives of the Education Committee of For Members Only and Dean Nobles concerning the issue of a Black Studies Department at Northwestern. Before discussing the substance of a Black Studies Department, and beyond that, the hiring of black faculty and administrators, we feel that there are several matters which need to be clarified on the basis of our representatives report of this meeting.

It appears that the administration, and, perhaps, the entire Northwestern community is taking particular delight in the myth of disunity and fragmentation among black students. In fact, it has been mentioned on several occasions that For Members Only no longer represent black students. We can say that this is only a myth and hope that we will never have to deal with this question again. The question of unity or who or how many do you represent has been the perennial question that has been posed to all organizations and leaders who represent black and oppressed people around the world. Indeed, we don't want to belabor the point, however, we must recognize the creation and perpetuation of the myth of black disunity at Northwestern as one way of clouding the real issues, problems, and concern of black students. The issues and problems are such that the questions of disunity, fragmentation, and who represents whom or what are unimportant.

Due to the misunderstandings in the past concerning whether or not black students want a Black Studies Department, we would like to say that on the basis of a survey taken last spring, almost all of the black students interviewed favored the establishment of a Black Studies Department.

Black students recognize the need for a Black Studies Department that would move beyond the traditional, and indeed, some of the present approaches to the experiences and problems of black people throughout the diaspora. We want, as you stated emphatically to the representatives of our education committee, the best Black Studies Department in the country at Northwestern. Therefore, we urge you to begin the necessary administrative steps that need to be taken. It would be helpful to us if you would fully explain what steps have to be taken, and whether or not the Resolution of the Faculty Senate of 1970 will be ratified by the Board of Trustees. It should
be clear that whatever resolution or motion is sent to the Board of Trustees for ratification, if this is necessary at this point, should be sanctioned by F.M.O.

The establishing of a Search Committee for a chairman of the department is of utmost urgency. F.M.O. recommends that this committee be established as soon as possible in order to expediate time. It is necessary that the majority of the members of this committee are Afro-American faculty members, students and administrators. F.M.O. would like to appoint the Afro-American members of this committee.

Since the informal meeting, F.M.O. has discussed several Afro-American scholars whom we are very interested in as a chairman. We would like for the Search Committee to contact the following individuals about our interest in them in order that they may send the necessary information to:

Lerone Bennett  
Johnson Publishing Co. Chicago

Robert Browne  
Black Economic Center (Research)  
112 West 120th Street

John Blasingame  
Dept. of History  
Yale University

Addison Goyle, Jr.  
Bernard Baruch College  
New York, New York

Mary Bell  
University of Maryland  
Dept. of History  
College Park, Maryland

F.M.O. feels that if a department is to be established within the next year or so, then the university will have to unfreeze the library fund in order to get the necessary books, micro-film, and periodicals. This is especially true for older material that is now being reprinted and micro-film. We have found the library lagging far behind many other colleges and universities in its collection dealing with the experience of black people in the new world. We would like a list of the library committee so we can communicate the urgent need to unfreeze the funds to build up an adequate collection dealing with the black experience. Indeed, if our department is to be the best, then its library collection will have to be one of the best in the nation following the same pattern as the Africana Library.

F.M.O. hopes to have a full scale blueprint of a Black Studies Department and guidelines for the hiring of a chairman and other faculty members some time in the near future. We feel that it is very necessary for us to develop the kind of department that will address itself to the needs of both the Northwestern community and broader black communities. We hope all of our plans will be completed by the time the formal negotiations begin.

Sincerely,

F.M.O., Executive Committee  
Melvin Williams  
Calvin Card  
Ronald Craig  
Suzanne Waddy  
Eileen Cherry
Rumblings Plague
Afro Studies Dept.

BY FRANCIS WARD

Dec. 23, 1972

EVANSTON, ILL. (AANS)—Open conflict may be near in the Afro-American Studies Department (AASD) at Northwestern University here, based on recent rumblings evidencing bitter internal turmoil.

Control and direction are the central issues in the dispute. On one side is the 11 member Committee on African-American Studies, whose main representatives are mathematics professor Joshua Leslie and Sterling Stuckey, an associate professor of history. George Fredericksen, a white history professor, chairs the committee.

On the other side is For Members Only (FMO), the Black student organization which grew out of the turbulent student activity on the campus, which ended in the 1969 seizure of the school administration building.

The man in the middle—symbolically as much as anything else—is Lerone Bennett Jr., the noted Black historian and senior editor of Ebony magazine, who was chosen last January as chairman of the AASD.

Just six months later, Bennett resigned the chairmanship, citing reasons of health and "prevailing circumstances." Though his health may well have been a factor, FMO members believe the "prevailing circumstances"—repeated clashes with and harassment from Stuckey and Leslie—were the chief reasons.

Another cause, they say, was the university's failure to grant Bennett and promised flexibility in shaping the department as he saw fit.

"He wanted to be a complete authoritarian," complained Stuckey. "His way of doing business made cooperation impossible."

Stuckey charged that Bennett would not share vital information with the committee nor allow it input into decisions affecting the department. He also felt that Bennett had not tried to hire in the department for four full professorships, two associates and two assistants.

"The chairman and members of that department should be the ones to set policy for the department.... The Black Community has no faith in that committee and realizes that it was one of the primary reasons prompting Lerone's resignation," said FMO in two separate statements.

The committee is without student voice, in FMO's opinion, and students have been "legislated off"—on a technicality—thereby rendering it impenetrable to student thought in determining its makeup and direction.