

Radicalism in Power: The Kafkaesque World of American Higher Education

By Abraham H. Miller

My remarks today are about the decline of American higher education. This is not a decline that has taken place across all disciplines and in all institutions. It is a decline that has taken place principally within the social sciences and humanities and in those institutions where administrators have abandoned their sacred responsibilities.

These responsibilities require administrators to lead an institution designed to preserve the best we have produced as a civilization and faithfully to transmit it to the next generation.

In far too many instances, administrators have chosen to abandon the roles of preserver and transmitter for the more politically pragmatic ones of crisis manager and distributor of resources among competing political interest groups. These administrators have chosen to act as if they were cogs in some corrupt urban political machine that functioned merely to dispense patronage. In taking on this role, they have made the decision to practice academic triage.

They have sacrificed the humanities and social sciences in order to preserve the integrity of the institution's "real" work, as they see it. Left elements in the social sciences and humanities assisted this decision by eagerly offering their disciplines for sacrifice.

What many of us in higher education find to be burning intellectual and societal issues are in reality only significant to us and certainly not to those with institutional authority. Hillsdale College's President, George Roche, and Boston University's President, Dr. John Silber, are well known exceptions that prove the rule. If we had more university administrators with their integrity and vision, American higher education in the social sciences and humanities would not be the fodder for editorial satire that it has become.

Current "Priorities." From the perspective of interest-group politics, the "real issues" on campus these days concern attracting overhead money, providing sufficient parking and dormitory space, making sure there are enough accessible condom dispensers, recruiting enough women and blacks to satisfy the government record keepers, seeing that gay pride week receives sufficient publicity, and making sure there is a store of functional ignorance in the event the NCAA does find out how the athletic team recruits. As one of my colleagues is fond of saying, once you get your priorities straight everything else falls into place.

University administrators have responded to political forces both within the university and the surrounding community. In fact, the role of the community is one of the least under-

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stood aspects of the politicization of the university that began in the post-war era with Berkeley's so called Free Speech Movement of 1964.

Even Roger Kimball, in his excellent book on academia, misses this point. He talks about the irony of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement giving birth to the current left-wing orthodoxy that is restricting debate.¹ But Berkeley's Free Speech Movement was not about free speech. It was about using the resources of the campus, violating its constitutionally mandated partisan and sectarian neutrality, for off-campus political action.²

Similarly, the ethnic studies conflict at San Francisco State College in the fall of 1968 was about using the college to mobilize the minority community for political action. This crisis was precipitated when George Murray of the English department was suspended after he urged his students to achieve new intellectual heights by bringing guns on campus.³

There had been some questions about Mr. Murray's capacity to teach English since he allegedly had only a seventh-grade proficiency in the language. But that was overshadowed, according to some, by Mr. Murray's life experience achievement as Minister of Education in the Black Panther Party. Those who objected to his role in the department were called "racists" and told that they were ill equipped to assess Mr. Murray's pedagogical competence, as he had been hired to teach *black* English. The Black Panthers, of course, were not synonymous with the black community no matter to what extent the radicals sought to create that illusion.

Dysfunctional Violence. Throughout the 1960s most campus conflict produced minimal results in terms of community mobilization and a lot of dysfunctional violence. In 1969, the "freaks," as they called themselves, of Berkeley's South Campus district and campus militants precipitated a violent confrontation over a piece of university-owned land that became known as the "People's Park."⁴

When the violence ended, one man was dead, another was blinded, scores were wounded, and the armed might of the California National Guard and several police departments controlled the park and the streets. That episode represented a watershed in radical thinking. What could not be won in the streets with violence could be won within the university itself by subverting the minds of captive audiences of college students.

1 Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), p.69.

2 C. Michael Otten, "Ruling Out Paternalism: Students and Administrators at Berkeley," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume XI, No. 5 (May/June, 1968), pp. 28-33.

3 James McEvoy and Abraham Miller, eds., "On Strike... Shut It Down," in *Black Power and Student Rebellion: Conflict on the American Campus* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1969). For a series of different perspectives on the same episode see: *Ibid.*, pp. 197-298.

4 Abraham H. Miller, "People's Park: Dimensions of a Campus Confrontation," *Politics and Society* (Summer 1972), pp. 423-457.

Those baptized by the confrontations of the 1960s and early 1970s are now in power. The society has provided them with tenured sinecures and pays them to think up new methods to destroy Western culture and civilization in the name of race, class, and gender, while the academic crisis managers attempt to contain the damage to the social sciences and humanities. In so doing they insure the balkanization of the curriculum, the destruction of Western values, and the undermining of the legitimacy of the higher educational enterprise.

Remarkably, on most campuses few care and many of those who do are reluctant to speak out because of McCarthyite intimidation by such labels as "racist" and "sexist."⁵ Because academic politics is always fraught with a peculiar brand of viciousness, once the accusations are made, others will line up to reinforce those accusations if there is even a remote political advantage in it for them.

As the left political agenda has become current orthodoxy reinforced by major academic organizations and university administrators, who sanctify one another's idiocy with campus awards, the office seekers, and opportunists, too, have learned to mouth appropriate cliches in order to advance their careers.

Thus the left agenda is now current wisdom. Those who challenge its policies are shouted down with now trivialized accusations of "racist" and "sexist."

As disheartening as the current campus experience is, one's being in Washington provides a perspective that is even more disheartening. With the possible exception of Dr. Lynne Cheney and a few conservative members of the federal education bureaucracies, people in Washington care even less.⁶ From the vantage point of the Potomac, the academy is not even a player in the policy process. On the Hill and in the executive branch, political life goes on and policy decisions are made without anyone even having so much as a subscription to the *American Political Science Review*.

The view in Washington is that academicians talk mainly to other academicians — who cares what they do? Who cares if Duke University Professor Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick chaired a panel at the last Modern Language Association meeting titled, "The Muse of Masturbation," and that her MLA colleagues wrote papers with such titles as "Desublimating the Male Sublime: Autoerotics, Anal Erotics, and Corporeal Violence in Melville and William Burroughs"?⁷ That is not a problem for policy concern. Masturbation may be an appropriate topic for the MLA's deconstructionists, but there is no sign that Congress will be taking it up in a legislative context.

Since most students can see unvarnished idiocy and faddism for what they are, the new faddism is not going to gain many converts. The more likely result will be that Hillsdale College, St. John's College and Boston University are going to get a flood of serious and gifted

5 Chester E. Finn, Jr., "The Campus: An Island of Repression in a Sea of Freedom," *Commentary*, Volume 86, No. 3 (September, 1989); Alan Charles Kors, "It Is Speech Not Sex the Dean Bans Now," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 1989, op/ed.

6 Lynne V. Cheney, *Humanities in America: A Report to the President, the Congress, and the American People* (Washington: The National Endowment for the Humanities, 1988).

7 *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Volume 104, No. 6 (November 1989), p. 1028.

students in numbers larger than they can absorb, and market forces are going to cause other colleges and universities to respond accordingly.

Relativism Thrives on the Racial Issue

I would be unconcerned if I thought those were the only results. But that analysis overlooks one significant aspect: the faddism is part of a left agenda to attack Western civilization and it is doing so by hitching itself to the racial issue. It is the racial issue more than any other that opened the university's door to a partisan perspective and an abdication of the classical ideal of the pursuit of objectivity. The Left teaches that all knowledge is relative and truth is nothing more than the shared perceptions and convictions of a community of speakers: a community that can be divided along race, class, and gender lines.

The Feminist Exploitation. Although the demand for a black perspective opened the way to narrowly defined partisanship taking root in the curriculum, no group has been more vocal or more active than the feminist scholars in higher education in both promoting themselves as victims and in carving out a "theoretical" structure that explains social behavior in terms of ideology.⁸ Feminist criticism of the structure of the curriculum starts with the premise that all of historical knowledge is tainted with a male bias, a bias infused into the culture by this exploitative and dominant sex. As Marxists see the societal superstructure — art, literature, science, and learning — to be a reflection of the economic base and an instrument of the preservation of an exploitative class structure, feminists rewrite the base and superstructure relationship in terms of gender, although they are certainly not averse to incorporating Marxist notions of class exploitation and motifs of racial subjugation. But it is gender that is for feminists the most important aspect of all human relations, and, as a result, all understanding of society, both across time and culture, must be viewed through the prism of gender.

Clear-Cut Ideology. Virginia Hyman, Professor Emeritus of English at Rutgers, sees feminist literary interpretation as a clear-cut case of ideology, where texts are transformed into mirror images of the reader's values and where knowledge is not an end in itself open to analysis and debate, but a means toward the achievement of a political objective.⁹

Where feminist interpretations are open to free debate, uninhibited criticism, and, where appropriate, empirical testing, they can play a meaningful intellectual role. A historical study, for example, that is aware of the issue of gender can be richer for the insights gained. But a historical study that embraces gender as a piece of blind faith and ideology is all the worse off for the attachment.

The political agenda of the militant feminists has nothing to do with incorporating new modes and orientations of scholarship into the curriculum. If that were all it was about,

8 Christina Hoff Sommers, "Feminism and the College Curriculum," *Imprimis*, Volume 19, No. 6 (June 1990), p.1.

9 Virginia R. Hyman, "Principles of Feminist Scholarship," *Academic Questions*, Volume 1, No. 1 (Winter 1987-88), p. 9.

there would be no issue. Scholarship should be closed to no perspective that is willing to subject itself to refutation.

Feminist principles, however, are neither hypotheses nor impressions, but basic premises of an ideology that has immunized itself from refutation. Feminists have openly debated whether women's studies should be ghettoized, as black studies currently are in the academy, or assimilated into the mainstream curriculum, but they have chosen neither option. Basically, however, they see the means to enshrine gender as the dominant factor in social analysis to be best achieved by destroying the traditional curriculum itself.¹⁰

Yielding Intellectual Turf. Feminists now have joined with militant blacks to attack the traditional curriculum in an effort to politicize the university and destroy the basic ethos of Western civilization. The university, wrapped in guilt, yielded intellectual turf first to militant blacks. And militant feminists have been exploiting that opening for their own gender imperialism ever since.

The basic confluence of interest is to assert, as the Marxists long have, that there is no such thing as objectivity or truth. All claims to objectivity or truth are merely the means of one group of exploiters preserving an ideology that enables them to maintain a rationale for their exploitation. To feminists, Western civilization is the chronicle of the exploiters of women, and to militant blacks it is the chronicle of the predatory race. Since truth is nothing more than the shared ideology of a community or class, so goes this argument, it is time that the community of victims be heard.

These arguments are nothing less than an assault on our very existence as a nation and a society. If truth is relative to select communities, who outside those communities will defend it? How will such thinking inspire us to defend our freedom as have the captive people of Europe who rose up to fight for theirs? Eastern European dissidents have demonstrated a belief in good and evil, truth and falsehood, that is not reducible to cultural relativism. For those ideals they were willing to go out in the streets to fight and die. What will a generation indoctrinated with relativism be willing to fight and die for?¹¹

Opening Wedge. The racial issue speaks volumes for the relativists. It is the opening wedge that creates pseudo communities of victims, demands for the legitimacy of partisan perspectives, and a balkanization of the curriculum and truth itself.

The Left now embraces the racial issue as if it owned it, and pushes the campus to pursue policies such as preferential hiring and admissions, intellectually isolated black studies programs, "decency codes," Orwellian definitions of racism, and racial sensitivity sessions. In doing so, it has made relativism unassailable orthodoxy and fueled the racial conflict that so dominates campus life and is becoming increasingly explosive.¹²

10 Thomas Short, " 'Diversity' and 'Breaking the Disciplines,'" *Academic Questions*, Volume 1, No. 3 (Summer 1988), esp. pp. 23-25.

11 Erazim Kohak, quoted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 13, 1990, p. B2.

12 After giving this lecture, I was delighted to see that columnist George F. Will, "The Journey Up From Guilt," *Newsweek*, June 18, 1990, p. 68, arrived at the same conclusion.

Of all the issues that dominate life on campus none has received the attention or created as much controversy as those surrounding race. To simply raise the issue of preferential hiring in the academic world is to incur the opprobrium "racist."

Even such black scholars as Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Walter Williams, and William Julius Wilson have been called "racists" and worse, because they sought to point out that the aspirations of preferential treatment as public policy and the realities are very different. Few white scholars have demonstrated the singular courage of the distinguished Ernest van den Haag, professor of law at Fordham, who placed much of the blame for campus racism on affirmative action. As he bluntly puts it, "I find affirmative action practices to be racist. Thus, the racial incidents they inspire do not surprise me."¹³

Running Afoul of Orthodoxy. Take the well-known case of Professor Stephan Thernstrom, Harvard's Winthrop Professor of History. Thernstrom, one of Harvard's leading professors and ever sensitive to the demands for topics to which black students could respond, dared to enter the quagmire of racial and ethnic issues. He found that his knowledge as a professor ran counter to the beliefs of some of his black students and was charged with racism. His crime: he used a book he had edited that described affirmative action as "government enforcement of preferential treatment in hiring, promotion and college admissions."¹⁴ I think most everyone in this audience, especially those who work daily in domestic policy, would have no trouble with that definition. In any event, as Professor Thomas Short notes, this definition was not Thernstrom's but that of a contributing author.¹⁵

But definition was not the only flaw some black students found with Thernstrom's course. He dared to read aloud from white plantation owners' journals "without also giving the slave's point of view"¹⁶ — as if such journals themselves would not be an indictment of the inhumanity of slavery.

Although the Harvard faculty rose to defend Thernstrom's academic freedom, his college dean described him as "insensitive," for not anticipating the "unintended import" of his words.¹⁷ Who among us is so prescient as to comprehend fully the unintended import of his words?

Kafka's Code of Decency. It is incidentally this very standard that resulted in the resignation of seventy-year-old Professor John Strenge at the University of Maryland last fall. Strenge, in what he perceived as paternalistic advice, told the only black female in his class

13 Ernest van den Haag, "Affirmative Action and Campus Racism," *Academic Questions*, Volume 2, No. 3, (Summer 1989), p.68; Thomas Sowell, "Affirmative Action: A World-Wide Disaster," lecture to The Heritage Foundation, May 24, 1990, expressed the same sentiments.

14 Thomas Short, "A 'New Racism' on Campus?" *Commentary*, Volume 86, No. 2 (August 1988), p.46.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

16 *Loc. cit.* p. 47.

17 *Loc. cit.*, p. 47.

that she would have to work extra hard because she was competing in a field dominated by white males. She took it as a racist and sexist remark and went to his dean. Strenge was perceived to be in violation of the university's "decency code" which holds faculty and students responsible for what they might "inadvertently communicate."¹⁸ Weeks earlier the University of Michigan's code had been struck down by a federal judge who called its language so vague that persons of common intelligence could only guess at its meaning.¹⁹ Rather than jump through the administrative hoops in one of these Kafkaesque proceedings attempting to enforce a code that is patently unconstitutional, Strenge resigned. As a sorrowful footnote, he died some months later. His family says that the episode had a profound effect on him.

Professor Thernstrom, in contrast, taken to the bosom of his Harvard colleagues, got the last word. He stated that the "ideological assault" would discourage him and would discourage others from ever teaching courses on racial and ethnic issues.²⁰ In the end, the students lost access to a distinguished scholar who would have provoked them to think in terms beyond the narrow confines of their own ideology.

The overreaction to racial issues on campus has grown as black enrollment has fallen. Large proportions of blacks have failed to graduate, the dropout rate being estimated as high as 70 percent for those admitted under special admissions programs.²¹ Campus isolation and racial issues are perceived by the media as major ingredients in this tragic equation. Yet, as black enrollment falls, the enrollment of Hispanics has increased; and for Asians the increase is nothing less than extraordinary.²²

The decline in black enrollment in graduate programs presents an especially difficult problem for a society committed to incorporating blacks into the mainstream of American academic life. The proposed solution has been for more affirmative action, "decency codes," awareness programs and flexible standards throughout all phases of the academic system.

Divisive Solutions. These very attempts at solution, like massive government intrusion into an economic crisis, are contributing to the problem. As Thomas Sowell has eloquently noted, affirmative action has caused a mismatch between students and schools. Since elite schools that take the top 2 to 3 percent of white students often reach down to the fiftieth percentile to achieve their quota for black students, these black students are thrown into un-

18 Abraham H. Miller, "Clipping Campus Free Speech," *Frederick Post* (Frederick, Maryland: October 27, 1989), op/ed, distributed nationally by the Scripps-Howard National Wire.

19 "Michigan Member Helps Defeat University Harassment Code," *National Association of Scholars, Newsletter*, Volume 1, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p.1.

20 Short, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

21 Thomas Sowell, *Education: Assumption versus History* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1968), pp. 134-135.

22 "Why Fewer Blacks Are Graduating," *U.S. News and World Report*, Volume 102, No. 22 (June 8, 1987), p.76; *U.S. News and World Report*, Volume 104, No. 12 (March 28, 1988), p. 53.

fair competition. Whereas many of them would have a high probability of success by being properly matched with an institution that attracted students of similar preparation, the unfair competition, in contrast, has deleterious results.²³

But elite schools need black students to satisfy goals, quotas, and timetables, so the mismatch continues. Sowell advises aspiring black college students that their job is to get a college education. The administrator's job is to produce a statistic, and the two are not necessarily compatible.²⁴

With elite schools dipping deep into the limited pool of black college applicants, lower-tier schools under the same pressure reproduce the same mismatch. As a consequence, in each tier of the system white students have their false stereotypes of black abilities reinforced. But three out of four black students who failed to graduate at Berkeley would have graduated at a lot of solid and reputable middle-tier schools, and probably at some of those with distinction.

That, however, is not the only problem. For the one out four of black students who manages successfully to meet the challenge of an elite school's curriculum, that student will continue to be viewed by white classmates as an unequal competitor and labeled with the derisive term "quota." The problem was expressed in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* by Alma Clayton-Pederson (M.Ed.) a student at Vanderbilt University. As she notes: "For the most part, white students who label us as such ["quotas"], have neither witnessed our ability to examine and discuss critical issues in the classroom nor observed our ability to solve complex problems in many different fields of study. We are seen merely as affirmative-action quotas, not as real contributors to the development of new knowledge."²⁵

But Ms. Clayton-Pederson's battle is not just with her fellow students, but also with those professors who fail to challenge the intellect of talented black students who have survived the system. These professors treat even these black students as if they are there to serve no other purpose than to be a statistic. "Shame on you," she says to them, and adds, "These professors do us and this country a great disservice."²⁶

Ending Orwellian Manipulations

What if affirmative action, defined operationally as quotas, ended? What would be the immediate result? Fewer blacks and Hispanics would be admitted to elite schools, yet the ones who were would have a higher probability of graduating, and their white peers would not view them through tainted perceptions. Those black students no longer recruited by elite schools to beef up the numbers would enter good second-tier schools where their probability of graduating would also be enhanced. Since mismatching would no longer take place, there would be in effect "more" black graduates. And no white student with high

23 Thomas Sowell, luncheon seminar, The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 24, 1990; also see Thomas Sowell, "The Plight of Black College Students," in Sowell, *Education: Assumptions versus History* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 130-149.

24 Sowell, "Education," p. 131; Thomas Sowell, *Choosing a College* (New York: Perennial Library, 1989).

25 *Wall Street Journal* October 10, 1989, "Letters."

26 *Ibid.*

grades and high SAT scores would ever enter a second-tier school with the belief and resentment that some black or minority applicant displaced him from his first-choice school.

There would be other salutary results: Dean Baker, a University of Michigan Regent, would no longer be expressing public concern that the value of a Michigan degree "is in grave danger if the university succumbs, for whatever reason to an admissions standard which compromises... academic integrity."²⁷ University of California Berkeley's Faculty Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations would not be describing diversity, as it did in a recent report, as requiring the granting of tenure to marginal candidates, nor would the committee be searching for an answer to the question of how affirmative action could co-exist with Berkeley's time-honored tradition of requiring "superior intellectual attainment... as an indispensable qualification for appointment and promotion to tenure positions."²⁸ White women who, according to Professor Sowell, show higher intelligence scores in every field than white males, come from solid middle-class backgrounds, and historically have been part of the higher education "system," would not be climbing on the backs of minorities for preferential treatment.²⁹ And the scandal at Harvard Medical College, which in pursuit of affirmative action, saw first lower admissions standards, then pass/fail grading and course repeats, and finally the awarding of a medical degree to a minority student who could not pass the medical boards in five attempts, would not have taken place.³⁰ A Midwest political science department would not have suffered the national embarrassment of having passed on a doctoral examination a minority graduate student who could not spell the names of two of Europe's most prominent political figures or appropriately show an understanding of the literature.³¹

Multi-Cultural Friction. In any multi-cultural society there is going to be friction, whether French and English in Quebec, Catholic and Protestant in Ulster, Arab and Jew on the West Bank, or black and white in America. But through preferential policies we have institutionalized such friction and made a veritable welfare industry out of it. These frictions now feed on themselves, and wherever they arise the solution inevitably is a call for more of those policies that produced them in the first place.

As a result of overreaction to racism, some blacks and left-wing whites champion a definition of racism attributed to sociologist Dr. Muluma Karenga, who argues that racism is the oppressors' power to destroy a people's culture, history, and ideas based on the oppressors' concept of race. The phenomenon of racism, according to this authority, is unique to the de-

27 Quoted in "Why Fewer Blacks Are Graduating," p. 76.

28 "Report of the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations, 1988-89," for the meeting of March 20, 1990, University of California, Berkeley Division, Appendix I.

29 Thomas Sowell, *Education*, pp. 78-79. This reference is to "equity feminism," which sometimes operates independently of the militant feminist attack on the curriculum.

30 Bernard Davis, M.D., *Storm Over Biology* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Press, 1986). The details of this episode are discussed at length in the chapter on medical education.

31 This episode was alluded to repeatedly at the November 1989 Madison Center Conference, Washington, D.C.

velopment of European culture.³² Karenga's definition is widely used, and the code word for it is "institutionalized white racism."

What kind of racial harmony is achieved through use of this flawed concept is beyond comprehension, especially when black students are encouraged to cite Karenga, demand "decency codes," sensitivity sessions and then invite Minister Louis Farrakhan to campus to spew his own brand of racism.³³

Given Karenga's Orwellian definition, Minister Farrakhan has every right to speak because he is not a racist: he lacks the critical factor of "empowerment." Since only those who have power can be racists, Minister Farrakhan, not being "empowered," is not a racist.

If one wanted to pursue this logic, what is being argued is that Adolph Hitler was not a racist until 1933, when he consolidated his power in the Reich. Prior to that, he was not "empowered" and, therefore, was not a racist.

The new institutionalized use of such conceptions in campus bureaucrats' treatment of racial incidents is the equivalent of throwing gasoline on a fire in an effort to extinguish it. Northern Illinois University Associate Vice President Barbara Henly in a report on racism in the residence halls uses a definition similar to Karenga's.³⁴ That an educated person seeks to deal with such an important issue as residence-hall racism by trivializing it and putting the burden entirely on white students is a sign of the Kafkaesque thinking currently in vogue on campus. Similarly, last term when the issue of racism came before the Bowling Green University Faculty Senate, the motion put forward was not to denounce racism, but only "institutionalized white racism."³⁵

Racial Sensitivity Sessions. The architects of the new era of racial harmony have additional devices in their Orwellian tool kit. One of the most prominent of these is the racial sensitivity, or awareness session, which is increasingly becoming required on campuses for both students and faculty involved in certain activities. I have not attended one of these sessions; however, I have spoken to students and faculty at different universities who have done so or who are acquainted with the procedures.

Racial sensitivity can, indeed, be a meaningful experience. A course drawing on the abundance of excellent social science literature on racism, with a solid reading list, an objective instructor, and a commitment to free-ranging discourse that encourages students to draw their own conclusions from hard data, is a course that could not only be a meaningful experience in terms of removing racial stereotypes but also a moving intellectual experience. Regrettably, too frequently this is not what happens, and the end product of much of the current practice appears to be the creation of racism even where it did not previously exist.

32 Cited in "Students Split on Racist Issues," *The News Record* (University of Cincinnati) June 1, 1990, p. 1.

33 David Kurapka, "Hate Story," *The New Republic*, March 30, 1988.

34 "Students Split on Racist Issues," p. 1.

35 Faculty Senate Minutes, "Racism," Bowling Green State University (Ohio), May 1990. The resolution was introduced by Professor Bermen but was postponed.

Racial sensitivity sessions, as too frequently practiced, are similar to what council governments in England attempted with civil servants. Armed with a definition of racism based on "empowerment" — that only white people could be racists, white civil servants were encouraged to confess their racism to their non-white colleagues, amid encouragement that was frequently indistinguishable from intimidation.³⁶ After several victims had nervous breakdowns, Margaret Thatcher stepped in and abolished the funding source, bringing the programs to a timely end.

Black Studies. Whenever there is racial conflict on campus, one of the most common reflexive solutions is to urge that whites be required to enroll in black studies courses. Common knowledge about campus life would suggest that no student was ever made happy by staring an additional course requirement in the face. There are black studies programs with good, solid academic content and standards, but there are also programs where the standards are weak, the material filled with propaganda, and the basic function of the program is to enhance the grade point average of black students having difficulty adjusting to campus life.³⁷

There are also certain themes in some black studies programs that tend to be taught as truths rather than as perspectives, and that would do little to enhance race relations.³⁸ In fact, these themes, most likely, produce quite the contrary result. Here are some of those: wars in Africa, a continent besieged by civil war (including the famine in Ethiopia), are the product of white colonialism; the Constitution of the United States is a racist document because it considered blacks to be a fraction of a human being and did not end slavery in 1789; the founding fathers were slaveholders and capitalist exploiters; and Columbus's discovery of the New World should be properly viewed as the advance party of slavery and genocide brought about by a predatory race.

Pseudo-Science. One of the more publicized courses in black studies is taught by City College of New York Professor Leonard Jeffries.³⁹ In this course, which draws few whites, Dr. Jeffries teaches that whites are a predatory race which suffers from the environmental deprivation of the last European ice age. This age Dr. Jeffries puts at between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago, a date that incidentally is off by some 12,000 years according to the most re-

36 "Lecturer Insisted That All Whites Were Racists," *The Times*, (London), August 27, 1987, p. 2; "Realities of Racism Awareness," *Ibid.*, p. 10b; "When Staff Are Ruled By Ideology," *Ibid.*, p. 10b; and from personal interviews London, August/September 1987.

37 Van den Haag, *op. cit.*; "Ambush at Amherst," *The New Republic*, June 27, 1988, p. 342; Thomas Short, "'Diversity' and 'Breaking the Disciplines,'" Sidney Hook, ed., "Stanford Documents," *Partisan Review*, Volume 55, No.4 (Fall 1988); John Leo, "The Class That Deserves Cutting," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 29, 1989, p. 58.

38 Fred Rueckher, "Black Studies at the City College of New York," *Measure*, No. 73, May/June 1988. See also Note 39 below.

39 Fred Rueckher, *op. cit.* Chester E. Finn, Jr., quotes the *New York Times* as reporting that in the spring term 1990 Dr. Jeffries told his students that "rich Jews who financed the development of Europe also financed the slave trade." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* June 13, 1990, p. A40. Dr. Jeffries has appeared on Washington Public Television Station Channel 32, where he discussed his ice and sun theories.

cent scientific evidence. But then we are not dealing with science. Whites, according to Jeffries, only emerged from the cave, with its hostile environment and its emphasis on survival, some 8,000 years ago and have not yet discarded their predatory instincts.

In contrast, the course teaches: black civilization blossomed in the benign environment of the African sun that led to the rise of Ancient Egypt. To demean blacks and destroy their heritage, whites have removed Egypt from Africa. The cultural wonders of Greece and Rome were taken from Egypt; thus, blacks are the progenitors of Western civilization.

Before you dismiss Dr. "J," as his students affectionately call him, consider the following. No less a public figure than New York State Commissioner of Education Thomas Sobol selected Dr. Jeffries to write the black history component of the "Curriculum of Inclusion," grades K-12, which Sobol is lobbying the New York Regents to implement.⁴⁰ Dr. Jeffries appears on Howard University's Channel 32, where he is accorded all the appropriate deference of a reputable scholar appearing on a university-based public television station.

One wonders how exposure to Dr. Jeffries's class, or one like it, would remove racism. In fact, common sense at least would suggest the opposite.

What exists on too many of our campuses is an environment where blacks and other minorities are accorded preferential treatment in student admissions and faculty appointments.⁴¹ One does not have to be an authority on Alexis de Tocqueville to comprehend the evils of ascriptive preference. They are written indelibly in America's tragic history of slavery and segregation and in the current abomination that is known as apartheid ever as strongly as they were written in France under the "old regime."

As Thomas Sowell demonstrates in his most recent scholarly work, anywhere you have racial or ethnic preference, you have an exacerbation of the tensions inherent in a multi-cultural society. Whether these tensions are between Africaner and African in South Africa, Chinese and Malays in Malaysia or white and black in America, they are all variations of the same theme.⁴² The solution is the elimination of preference not the exacerbation of hostilities by creating more preference.

Thomas Short in his analysis of the "new racism," argues that if the purpose of the plans and policies of the type alluded to here is to combat racism, "why is it that racial tension is at its height precisely in those institutions in which they have been most extensively adopted?"⁴³ Thomas Sowell, in a recent lecture in this very auditorium, argued that his analysis of preferential treatment across nations and across historical epochs strongly suggests that preferential policies have all the potential of creating the kind of ethnic violence we are now seeing in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union.⁴⁴

40 Leonard Jeffries, Jr., "Review of the New York State Curricular Materials K-12 Focus: African American Culture," November 1988, unpublished.

41 Walter E. Williams, "Race, Scholarship and Affirmative Action," *National Review*, May 5, 1989, pp. 36-38.

42 Thomas Sowell, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (New York: William Morrow, 1990)

43 Short, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

44 Sowell, lecture, *op. cit.*

What Is To Be Done

As responsible thinking individuals, as individuals who believe in the humanity and basic dignity of all people, it is our moral obligation to speak out against the crisis manager mentality that on our campuses is achieving short-run quiescence and courting long-term racial disaster, which the crisis managers are either too ignorant to see or hope will not erupt until after they retire.

We must not restrict to department and faculty meetings the places for our objections to be heard. We are often not only unable to make changes there, but too frequently we cannot even get a fair hearing for our ideas in those fora. We must take our objections to the American people in general and to the parents of those who come to us for an education.

We must use whatever talents we have as writers and lecturers to gain access to the editorial columns of the popular newspapers and magazines and to the fora that exist within the electronic media.

We must use our academic and political freedom as a bulwark against administrative intimidation and speak openly to the public about what is happening to higher education in America.

We must make the curriculum, which is already a political issue on the campus and across academic communities, a public issue during gubernatorial and legislative campaigns. When the chief educational administrator of a state seeks to implement a curriculum that possesses as its objective the destruction of Western culture and civilization, we should make the voters aware of who appointed him and what have been the consequences of that appointment.

Duke University's Frederic Jameson says, "To create a Marxist culture in this country, to make Marxism an unavoidable presence in American...life, in short to form a Marxist intelligentsia for the struggles of the future — this seems to me the supreme mission of the Marxist pedagogy and a radical intellectual life today."⁴⁵

Earning Loyalty and Support. We should ask those whose charitable contributions go to Duke University if that is how they want their money spent; if that is an agenda that they share. We should ask the parents of Duke University students and the school's alumni if that is the kind of education they wish to support. Wherever there is an assault on Western culture and values, we should alert the people whose largess and tuition money sustain the institutions. Professors must be free to teach their honest opinions, but parents, and alumni, and philanthropic institutions should also be free to find institutions worthy of their loyalty and support.

Those who have pushed a partisan agenda against Western values have claimed the high ground on the racial issue. We must expose the falsehood of both their claims and their policies, which are now breeding racial confrontation on the campus. We must demonstrate the linkages between those policies and the racial disasters which now visit the campus.

45 Quoted by T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr., in "Conservatism and the American Academy," *The Intercollegiate Review*, Volume 25, No.2 (Spring 1990), p.26.

We must reach out in meaningful ways to the minority communities so that they will understand how their children are being exploited as record-keeping statistics. We must encourage the minority communities to demand that their children be given an education, not just a degree.

We must make ourselves available to the minority communities to use our faculty skills and our knowledge to enhance educational opportunities for minority children. This could be pursued in a variety of ways. One would be to bring into special summer programs talented minority grade school and high school students. These programs must be funded by private contributions and through the donation of our own services. We could use our sabbatical time to offer our instructional and research services to minority high schools and colleges. We must not just oppose the exploitation and degree giveaways that the Left has created as a mechanism of educational policy, we must replace them with positive programs, even if it requires strong commitments of our own resources and energies.

We must reaffirm the principles of our democratic institutions and our cultural inheritance. We must acknowledge our historical flaws, but not as means of interpreting our entire historical and cultural experience or as a determination of our historical destiny. In the process, we must teach minorities that a cultural identity that embraces Western values is no more a denial of their own ethnic inheritance than poverty and despair are statements about their ethnicity.

We must make available to the public meaningful guides to higher education so that every parent and prospective student will know what kind of education really takes place on the campus.

Ending Corrupt Practices. Regrettably, we can not count on the American Association of University Professors or the professional organizations to denounce the corruption of educational standards, whatever the basis for that happening. These organizations have been silent. When individuals have called upon them to arrest the deterioration of standards in specific departments, the professional organizations have refused to become involved. Consequently, we must call upon such organizations as the National Association of Scholars, the Madison Center, and the public media to investigate and expose the most egregious of violations of academic integrity. Once professors who give away degrees and administrators who use the wizardry of electronics to change grades behind professors' backs know they can be publicly exposed, some of the more egregious of these corrupt practices will be ended.

Now is the most opportune time in recent history to teach about Western values. As Marxism crumbles in Eastern Europe, as the subjects of its oppression destroy its icons, rip its hated symbols from their national flags, and return their cities and towns to their true names, the American Left is trying to rewrite history to portray this as a victory for the Left.⁴⁶ This is an act of pathetic desperation. The last citadel of left-wing orthodoxy is on the American campus. But it is a vulnerable citadel, for it will neither stand up to historical truth nor to the nightly news footage from Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, or even Moscow. We should seize this opportunity.

46 Paul Hollander, "Communism's Collapse Won't Faze the Marxists in Academe," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 23, 1990, p. A44.

Reopening the Free Marketplace. We must attack the Left's ideology, not with their weapon of censorship, but by reopening the free marketplace of ideas within the university and by divorcing the partisanship of the Left from its monopoly of the racial issue. In a robust intellectual environment their ideas will neither be able to withstand the force of argument nor the example of history.

If you think we cannot achieve this, I might remind you of what public choice school critics have accomplished in the public school arena. There we have gone from a misperception that "choice" was an anti-black weapon to an understanding that it is the ultimate empowerment of poor blacks to shake up a bloated, dysfunctional educational bureaucracy. We now hear Milwaukee's black legislator Annette "Polly" Williams tell the top-heavy poverty bureaucracy: "I don't believe in funding dependency and despair, but that is just what the poverty industry is doing. In us poor black folks, the white liberals have a captive market. Well I got news for you. We don't need to be led."⁴⁷

I am confident that someday, in a similar fashion, minority students are going to look at their professors and say: "I am not here to fill a quota, to be part of your left wing political agenda or to be passed through and given a degree. I am here to be educated and to become a useful and productive member of a great and decent society. And if you cannot help me achieve that, you'd better at least get out of my way."

Ultimately we will win because the things minorities want for themselves and their children are no different than what all people want for themselves and their children. The Left agenda will be abandoned with the same emotion that brought down the Berlin Wall. Let us hope and pray that this happens long before the bizarre policies that now exacerbate racial divisions produce catastrophic racial confrontations.

47 Quoted in "How 'Conservative' Won Vouchers," *Crain's Chicago Business*, April 16, 1990, p. 1.