

BLACK PRE-COLLEGE EDUCATION: NOTES ON AN AGENDA FOR THE 70's

1. The combination of the war in Viet Nam and the transformation of the civil rights movement into a Black power mood and movement has brought about the hastened decay of the educational system in the United States and highlighted the present crisis in Black education. The war has clearly revealed the moral bankruptcy of the country and the educational system to white students and the Black mood has led to a questioning of the legitimacy of the system by Black people. Hence, the authorities must deal with the revolt of white students while they are trying to devise ways of consolidating their hold on Black education. At the same time, the country is in an economic crisis and the administration in Washington is attempting a fundamental re-alignment of political forces based on a white, conservative, racist "middle America" constituency.

2. Hence, the present context of Black education for the educational system is one which seeks to accommodate itself to the perceived wishes of middle America. Nixon's April report on desegregation was a clear indication of this direction. In this report he gave light lip-service to the concept of "equality of educational opportunity", while at the same time guaranteeing the loopholes which would allow little change in the status quo in the North and provide the means for defeating school desegregation in the South. He did this by laboring the distinction

between "de jure" and "de facto" segregation. Time magazine, in its March 9, 1970 issue (before the President's report) opined, "By slowing integration and especially by opposing busing, President Nixon is taking a hugely popular position." It also noted, "So far, the President has pulled back on effective voting rights for blacks and moved modestly on equal employment efforts. There is no sign of a drive against segregated housing." The emanations from Washington are clearly in the clutches of racist middle America.

3. At the same time, the present mood of America has created the atmosphere for escalated repression against Black people, and indeed, has largely condoned the killing of middle class white students at Kent State. Augusta, Chicago, and Jackson State demonstrate that the police and military forces feel that they have a clear mandate to shoot down unarmed Black people. It is not likely that the "lesson" of Kent State will be repeated, but we cannot be so sanguine about the others. So-called gains by Black people within the system are likely to call forth more anti-Black feelings as in the case of the violent white reaction to the election of Brother Gibson as mayor of Newark.

4. The Black Studies movement has caused the educational establishment to escalate its education repression of Black students. The initial reaction was to declare that there is no such thing as Black Studies, but they have now begun to co-opt and define these programs at all levels. Several techniques



of consolidating white control are being used at the pre-college level. Some are; A) promoting massive in-service and summer programs to train white teachers of Black studies. (Principal funding for this is coming from the Office of Education), B) pushing the "ethnic studies" concept of "minority" groups, thus absorbing the Black experience into an amalgam of Indians, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Asians; and even in some cases, Appalachian whites, C) moving ahead on desegregating public schools in the South with the consequence of massive firing and demotions of Black principals and teachers and placing Black students with racist school administrators, teachers, and students. (According to the NEA more than 5,000 Black principals and teachers have been fired or demoted since the 1954 Brown decision. Also, recent testimony by Black students before a Senate committee indicated that in many "desegregated" schools the Black students are given separate Black teachers, lunch periods, and in some cases, school bells!), D) development of "grantsmanship" programs for research and experimental programs for Black education by the federal government and private foundations. The vast majority of this money goes to white universities and research and/or educational consulting firms. Only those Black firms which are solidly in the camp of the white educational establishment receive substantial grants. Kenneth Clark's Metropolitan Applied Research Center, which is involved in promoting integration receives annually hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Ford Foundation