

an important role in examining particular events or police activities and in trying to bring their local police forces to account, while the Review Panel and Gifford reports show how local authorities can intervene to commission inquiries which can help to discover not only what really happened in particular cases, but why, and point the way to solutions. Such inquiries may not achieve the status of government-commissioned inquiries such as Scarman's of 1981 but they can perform the invaluable task of providing an alternative account of events and, in the process, of giving a voice to those who would otherwise go unheard.

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Review Essay: Summing up Black Studies after Two Decades

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After nearly two decades the debate continues over the nature of black studies. This tends to be positive because, when the debate is taken up throughout the United States, a common framework can emerge based on democratic participation by faculty and students. This is possible when there is a major report around which the debate can take place, a fixed focus for the critical summation of the field and a basis for projecting future developments. The Ford Foundation has recently published an essay by Nathan Huggins, W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, *Afro-American Studies: A Report to the Ford Foundation* (96 pp.). This is likely to make a significant impact, just as the conference that Ford funded at Yale on black studies set the tone for the 1970s (see Robinson, Foster and Ogilvie (eds), *Black Studies in the University: A Symposium*, 1969). Since the Ford Foundation has been the biggest private contributor of funds to black studies this report is likely to make an impact in the funding area as well. This review is intended to contribute to the debate on the Huggins report.

Mainstream Views

Huggins begins his discussion by placing black studies in the historical context of the American university and the black student movement. He notes that after the Second World War the university in the USA was going through a basic transition, especially as summed up by Clark Kerr and James Perkins. It was being transformed by the impact of increased numbers of students ("the coming of age of the children of the post war baby boom"), and the increased role of science and technology. It was dominated by the "multiversity or the federal-grant university" and was the basis for the new "knowledge industry". This represented something new, a democratized university guided by utilitarian aims, more like the land grant university rather than the older private institution originally based on the humanities.

So, since blacks were part of this overall increase in the size of the general student population, sheer numbers made a difference to how blacks dealt with the university.

In earlier years, the handful of black students managed to fit in, badly or well, nursing as private matters any hurts they felt. With larger numbers, it became possible (indeed, almost inevitable) to consider being Black on a white campus a collective condition. Private hurts became public grievances. (p. 9)

In addition, black students were influenced by the general developments in the society, especially the "civil rights movement", and this continued to escalate into a new militancy not seen before:

Between 1966 and 1970, Black undergraduates became increasingly militant. Events outside the university had much to do with it, but it also seemed that each new freshman class was more militant than the one before, especially as students were increasingly drawn from the inner city. (p. 19)

Huggins contends that "the Black student movement . . . was virtually indifferent to Marxist ideology", but had "divided themselves roughly into two camps: integrationists and separatists . . . The separatists, also, could be divided into 'Black power' advocates and cultural nationalists". Huggins, himself an integrationist, holds that:

To the integrationist, separating oneself from the institution or undermining it was self-defeating. Not only must one work through the institution, but one should protect its academic integrity while getting it to adopt Afro-American programs. Any victory would be hollow if its "spoils" were debased in the process of being won. (p. 42)

On the other hand (p. 44) "the Black power argument was . . . one of (Black) self-reliance . . . a tactic intended to lead to a more fruitful interracial cooperation". Huggins contends that cultural nationalism as a "separatist ideology was of slight real influence on college campuses. . . ." (p. 45) Further, these differences did not become divisive until the issue moved from whether to have a programme to what kind of programme was to be developed. Unity was maintained when programme innovation took place. He states (p. 40): "As long as matters remained at the reform stage, implicit differences could be ignored. When it came time to build and define programs, compatibility among the various agents of reform became strained."

Finally, introducing the last decade of program consolidation he states (p. 41) that "By 1975, the decade of ideology was over."

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His analysis of white administrators and faculty is generous indeed. He states that between 1966 and 1970 there were three motives that:

compelled . . . the march for change. First, there was . . . a genuine sense of American higher education's complicity in the social inequities resulting from racism. . . . Second, it had become fashionable to bring Blacks onto staffs and faculties. . . . Third . . . administrators felt it important to look reasonably open to change. . . . (pp. 19-20)

For black students he says (p. 40) "three basic concerns lay behind the demand for Afro-American studies — the political need for turf and place, the psychological need for identity, and the academic need for recognition". Put together, the conflict in substance was between the white supporters of the liberal arts who (p. 13) "supposed certain concepts, ideals, principles, values to be universal rather than particular to any people or culture" and black students who saw these (p. 13) "humanists as arrogant white men in self-congratulatory identification with a grand European culture. To those students, such arrogance justified the charge of racism".

Huggins goes on to discuss six models as the typical administrative alternatives: the programme, the college, the department, graduate programmes, the undergraduate service centre, and the research centre/institute. He makes two strong conclusions:

1. From an academic point of view, the "program" has been the most successful. It acknowledges the interdisciplinary character of Afro-American studies by using faculty from established departments. It relies on the president and the dean to guarantee the program through budget allocation to the departments involved. (p. 46)
2. The research institute seems the most attractive and useful instrument to develop serious scholarship in this field. So far, none have succeeded in establishing themselves. There are several reasons: (1) there are too few high quality scholars in the field to support several competing centers; (2) ideology has tended to dominate some, weakening their appeal to some of the best scholars; (3) lack of capital funding has forced them all to rely on funds generated year by year and on the generosity of a host institution. (p. 55)

On the issue of curriculum Huggins includes an appendix of course listings from nine schools. In the text he provides a summary-style critique of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) model of a core curriculum without dealing with it in any detail: "The National Council apparently understood discipline to mean doctrine". In sum he notes that since 1974 there has been a decline in student interest based on the weakness of the curriculum:

- (1) Students, both Black and white, increasingly turned from political to career concerns;
- (2) the atmosphere in many courses was hostile and antagonistic to white students; (3) many of the courses lacked substance and academic rigor; and (4) campus communities

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had been exhausted by the rhetoric, bombast, and revolutionary ideology that still permeated many of these courses and programs. The white guilt many Black activists had relied on had been spent. (p. 58).

He responds to the critical posture of NCBS towards the mainstream academic disciplines with the following challenge:

One would hope that such programs in Afro-American studies would submit their own programs, pedagogy, and assumptions to as harsh a critical gaze as they level at those of others. The time is past when questions about the rightness or wrongness of Afro-American studies are constructive. Afro-American studies exists and has established itself well enough to continue to exist. Accepting that, it is important to require it to meet standards comparable to those of any other undergraduate major. It should produce students with specific knowledge, and the skills to make use of it, but at the same time a broad enough view of the world and of human experience to place their special knowledge in a meaningful context. It is my impression that very few Afro-American studies programs do this well. There is nothing about the subject matter of the field, or its focus, that makes these criteria impossible. (p. 66)

Critique

Huggins has established in this last quote a consensus position, that black studies must uphold the highest critical standards for itself if it is to develop. This is a task many professionals in the field have been taking very seriously for some time, although clearly it is not easy nor popular to raise criticisms and self-criticisms. Indeed, Huggins is to be commended for his courageous statement, even if I take strong exception to some of it.

The first general issue that I find inadequately treated is the general issue of ideology. Huggins gives his position away, much as Daniel Bell did in his end of ideology pronouncement, by equating the end of ideology with the decline of a conscious opposition and the ascendancy of conservatives (which, in fact, is merely the emerging dominance of a right-wing ideology). In fact, his very treatise is a missile in the struggle for ideological hegemony of black studies. There are no self-evident facts, especially dealing with a value-laden issue like the condition of black people in the USA, inside the University or not. Further, Huggins belittles the impact of racism. Racism is barbarism, whether dressed in sophisticated academic rhetoric or blatantly expressed in grim unemployment rates. I remember my own revulsion at the Yale conference in 1969 when some mainstream white and black scholars seemed seriously to entertain the question of whether there was any intellectual validity to studying the black experience. Together with Professor Huggins I believe this question should never be raised, and if

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raised we should defeat it with all the vigour of Du Bois, Woodson, King and Malcolm!

I think that Huggins does justice to one position, his own integrationist position. What he misrepresents is the impact of cultural nationalism and Marxism, while totally omitting Pan-Africanism. If anything, the dominant tendency in black studies has been cultural nationalism, and, while often contributing to its weakness, it is this fact which has shaped much of the intellectual debate among black scholars. The discussion of black scholars with white scholars has been dominated by the integrationists. This is especially true in the area of black literature. The black debate has been organized around the black aesthetic concept as expressed in the work of scholars like Stephen Henderson, Addison Gayle, Houston Baker and Amiri Baraka. Baker's critique of the attempt by younger integrationist scholars (e.g. Robert Steptoe and Henry Gates) is especially revealing in this regard. In a popular sense, the widespread cultural practice of Kwanza reflects this same black cultural nationalism.

Marxism has never been the dominant tendency but it has always been an influential tendency since the emergence of the Black Panther Party and their spread of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung thought. Indeed, the only murder associated with the founding of black studies occurred at UCLA in a struggle between cultural nationalist forces and Marxist forces. It is also important to point out that there was a national debate between the nationalist forces and Marxist forces within black studies carried out by activists and scholars that preceded the late 1970s/early 1980s "scholarly" debate over the relationship between race and class. Black students faced conflicts with the State Department over securing visas for black Marxist expatriates like Shirley Graham DuBois and Elizabeth Catlett. Finally, the major organizations of the black student movement were greatly influenced by Marxism. This includes a wing of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SNCC (as explained by James Forman in his autobiography, *The Making of a Black Revolutionary*), NABS (the National Association of Black Students), and SOBU (Student Organization for Black Unity, especially when it changed into YOBU, the Youth Organization for Black Unity).

The most glaring error of omission in treating ideology is the neglect of Pan-Africanism. This is especially interesting since several of the course lists so clearly reflect this (see Cornell, for instance). He also mentions the role of St Clair Drake in the Stanford programme, but fails to note that Drake's main work since his WPA classic on Chicago (*Black Metropolis*), co-authored with Horace Cayton) has been on the similarities and differences of blacks throughout Africa, the Caribbean, and the USA (the African Diaspora). A recent issue of the *Journal of Negro Education* on black

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studies had several articles dealing with this issue, including one by Drake himself.

Somehow it seems that Huggins lets his ideological orientation determine his view of efforts to forge a standard core curriculum by NCBS. The NCBS report was a committee effort to standardize the general scope and type of course offerings. He makes interesting comments on some of the discussion of curriculum rationale, but he misses the essential value of the actual curriculum model proposed. The NCBS model is a relatively conventional approximation of existing academic norms, and can easily be used by the programme administrative model he advocates.

NCBS Core Curriculum for Afro-American Studies

(Adopted at 4th Annual Conference - 26-29 March 1980 by the National Council for Black Studies)

Introduction to Afro-American Studies			
Level 1	Social/Behavioural Studies	Historical Studies	Cultural Studies
Level 2	A. Basic Literature Review or Survey	A. African Pre-history through Reconstruction	A. Basic Literature Review or Survey (music, aesthetics, etc.)
Level 3	B. Current Research and Emerging Issues	B. Post-reconstruction Current and Emerging Issues in Historical Interpretation and Evaluation	B. Current Research and Emerging Issues (Contemporary cultural expression and transformation, etc.)
Level 4	Senior Seminar Course Area Synthesis and Application of Insights or Previous Study		

A critical debate for the last few years has been over the development of a generally acceptable introductory text for the field. This is desirable because it contributes to a necessary pedagogical standardization, an essential development for every academic field. Huggins is either unaware of this debate or he fails to inform us why it is not important enough to consider. He also fails to indicate the important work undertaken by the Institute of the Black World (IBW), involving over 200 black studies scholars. He gives

an IBW "obituary", but fails to note that the IBW, utilizing a FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) grant, set up and coordinated a national peer review process that selected model courses fitting the NCBS model. This is making a great impact on the quality of course design in black studies more than any black studies-type course developments in the other mainstream disciplines.

Huggins is at his best in dealing with administrative organization, especially his advocacy for the programme and research institute. Somehow, we might have gained by a full analysis of the Harvard situation. Also, I do take exception to his notion that the country can only expect at this time to have one or two major research institutes. Huggins states:

Given the still uncertain status of Afro-American Studies departments and programs throughout the country, probably the best institutional support for the development and extension of the field of study will come from one or two centers or institutes of advanced study devoted to the subject.

While such a proposal might work for the development of super-computers or a research method, Afro-American studies cannot be placed under the leadership of one small brain trust. At best, critical research questions can be pursued with this approach, e.g. an institute devoted to the study of slavery, or an institute devoted to the development of computer-assisted techniques in the study of Afro-American literature. This would require a more open-ended democratic view of the research enterprise and not some elitist top-down model of how the field might develop.

A more useful proposal would be a multi-phased improvement of the professional life of the field, including journals, professional organizations and annual conferences for the reporting of research and sharing experiences of administrative and curriculum developments. Further, more attention should be given to the development of texts that represent the interdisciplinary forces that make up the field.

I suspect, however, that the Ford Foundation is already buying into the Huggins proposal. Susan Berresford, a Foundation Vice-President, makes this clear in the preface:

The aim now, Professor Huggins tells us, is to bring more sophisticated methodologies to bear on the study of Black issues and to expand the presence of Black studies in conventional disciplines... We hope (the Huggins report) will serve as a guide and stimulus to other donors interested in aiding a scholarly initiative now well under way. (p. 4)

However, as was my role at the Yale conference, I find myself giving advice to the Ford Foundation. We have several outstanding problems that need to be taken up by several scholars, including national database

development and replicated research towards scholarly professional consensus: we need a critical summation of the entire field, including quantified trend data, documented case studies of the historical development of key programmes and organizations, and a way of monitoring the ideological and philosophical issues of importance to those involved.

Towards a Critical Summation of Black Studies: Some Proposed Topics

1. Current state of the field (patterns of institutionalization and development)
 - a. philosophy of education
 - b. academic organization
 - c. administrative organization
 - d. faculty
 - e. students
 - f. research
 - g. publishing
 - h. evaluation.
2. History of the field
 - a. preconditions
 - b. origins
 - c. patterns of experimentation
 - d. trends towards standardization.
3. Politics of the field
 - a. black movements for change
 - b. politics of the university
 - c. international issues and Pan-Africanism.

We need a major conference at least every two years for the purpose of summing up the field, because at this time none of the existing professional organizations has been able to meet this need (funding and professional skill development is needed for this. We also need a national training institute to build quickly a national corps of prepared classroom teachers and interdisciplinary-focused scholars, e.g. to re-tool scholars trained in disciplines to teach basic interdisciplinary courses, to orient department heads in the traditional disciplines to the national trends in Afro-American studies (based on the view that knowledge leads to understanding and tolerance), and to give more assistance to scholars who are in colleges that require large teaching loads which force them to fall behind the most advanced developments in their field.

However, the future of black studies will not be a function of what the funding agencies think or do, but rather what the students and faculty in the field actually think and do. I think a national debate on the Huggins report will add to the development of a national consensus.

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