

Race, Power and the Emergence of Black Studies in Higher Education

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Discussions of Black Studies' history and institutional existence frequently begin with the unrest that accompanied its entry into the American academy during the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹ The prolonged strikes and demonstrations that broke out at several major institutions over this issue underscored the contemporary observation that "seldom in the history of academic disciplines has an area of study been born with so much pain and anguish."² Emphasis on the combative and the confrontational, however, obfuscates the importance of race and cultural hegemony as fundamental issues in Black Studies' rather precarious institutional infancy. Unlike the appraisal of its area studies predecessors—including American and African Studies, which were judged initially on the basis of intellectual integrity and coherence—the social construction of race encumbered the evaluation of Black Studies' viability as a legitimate field of inquiry.

Recent assessments of higher education decry changes instituted in the late 1960s. Allan Bloom, for instance, maintains that "enlightenment came close to breathing its last during the sixties," a period of "unmitigated disaster" in which the institutional changes enacted were best described as "reforms without content."³ In his provocatively titled book, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, he concludes, "when the dust settled it could be seen that the very distinction between educated and uneducated in America had been leveled, that even the pitiful remnant of it expressed in the opposition between highbrow and lowbrow had been annihilated."⁴ Of course, to argue that increased institutional accessibility and diversity in the curriculum and the campus community

“lowered” or “leveled” the quality of postsecondary education presumes that institutional choices prior to the 1960s represented the meritorious result of open, democratic competition.

The implied link between membership among the “best and brightest” and possession of an advanced degree has been more illusory than real. Between 1915 and 1940 not only was entry onto the academic playing field artificially impeded by race, but ethnicity, gender and class distinctions served to exclude as well. According to David O. Levine,

[t]he calls for an ‘aristocracy of brains’ were manifested perversely in exclusionary admissions quotas at nearly all of the country’s leading private liberal arts colleges and many highly regarded state universities. Rapidly increasing tuition charges in the 1920s and limited scholarship and federal financial assistance in the 1930s precluded even further the enrollment of significant numbers of worthy but poor young people. The ambition of those less privileged students able to attend college, while greater than their elders’, were too often limited to the study of less prestigious subjects at less prestigious schools. Frustration mounted with these glaring examples of the inequality of educational opportunity as higher education became more central to America’s culture of aspiration.⁵

The notion that the academy’s mythical luster might be recaptured by a “return to basics” in the curriculum typifies the recommendations for stemming higher education’s qualitative deterioration.⁶ E.D. Hirsch’s contribution to the debate lies in the promotion of “cultural literacy,” that is, the assumption of every literate American’s familiarity with a standard body of knowledge. University training would presumably build upon this foundation with more specificity and precision. In *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Should Know*, Hirsch offers a list of “5,000 essential names, phrases, dates, and concepts” as a standard. Although the components of this proposed shared body of knowledge are not static, Hirsch cautions, approximately eighty percent of the elements are more than one hundred years old. The list contains comparatively few references to African-Americans, ethnic minorities or women. Pragmatism, Hirsch argues, necessitates accepting the proposition that Americans “make social and economic progress *only* by teaching myths and facts that are predominantly traditional.”⁷ Accepting Hirsch’s position—acknowledgement of the underrepresentation of non-Western and non-male references while insisting that the pursuit of traditional myths move the nation forward—demands rejection of a fundamental concern of the early Black Studies movement.

The black, ethnic, and, later, women’s studies debates of the late 1960s and early 1970s were rooted partially in the desire to obviate accepted myths and

stereotypes used to rationalize inequality and exclusion. More important, however, were the explicitly functional expectations that discrete programs would improve the status of racial, ethnic and gender constituencies within and outside the academy. This involved more than creating new programs and departments that would be distinguished by their multidisciplinary approach to a single cultural or gender group. The more vocal advocates of cultural or women's studies foresaw changes in the composition of the academic community as well as the opportunity to serve as agents of change and empowerment for "minorities" and women in the larger society. The debate surrounding Afro-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley provides a useful example.

In April 1968, shortly after Martin Luther King's assassination, members of the Afro-American Student Union (AASU) at Berkeley proposed the creation of a "four year, interdisciplinary degree program [with] the traditional academic purpose of developing a body of knowledge and methodology appropriate to that body of knowledge."⁸ Although Berkeley was not the first campus to hear demands for, or to house Black Studies, its subsequent approval of an Afro-American program exerted considerable influence upon other similarly challenged institutions.

The AASU contended that traditional higher education was detrimental to the needs and best interests of Afro-Americans. It victimized black students while concurrently alienating them from their communities. Consequently, the group concluded, the black graduate offered little of value to his community. The call for Black Studies thus acknowledged the students' belief that "[w]e can no longer prostitute our minds to the vain and irrelevant intellectual pursuits of Western society while our community lies in ruin and our people are threatened with concentration camps. This would amount to intellectual shuffling and we are determined to shuffle no more."⁹ The AASU recommended consolidating extant Berkeley courses on black life and culture into an interdisciplinary program incorporated within an established department. They expected the program to evolve into an autonomous department with classes in black drama, art, history, anthropology, literature, economics, journalism and political science. Community outreach and experimental courses, already available through Berkeley's Extension program, constituted critical components for developing ties between the University and the black community.¹⁰

Once the AASU submitted its proposal to Berkeley Chancellor Roger W. Heyns, he selected black sociologist Andrew Billingsley to help the group refine the plan before they forwarded it to requisite University committees. Billingsley's appointment to the newly created administrative post, Assistant Chancellor for Academic Affairs, became effective in September 1968. Approximately two months later, the new Assistant Chancellor and the AASU crafted a revised draft for review by the Chancellor, the Budget Committee, the Educational Policy Committee, and the College of Letters and Science Executive Committee. Heyns also invited commentary from individual faculty members with research or

teaching interests in the black diaspora. Unlike the initial April effort, the November proposal outlined a four year, degree-granting Black Studies program under the aegis of an independent Afro-American Studies department.¹¹ Berkeley's black faculty, administrators and graduate students generally supported the concerns raised in the AASU proposal through a written statement calling for more than a "token" institutional effort to eliminate racism. They insisted that the administration "not delude itself that those few of us on campus represent progress; that those few courses of black study represent change; that the larger number of black students represent a victory in admissions."¹² Agreement with the principles embodied in the proposal, however, did not overcome conceptual differences regarding substance and, later, confrontational methods employed to coerce institutional approval.

Minority faculty members generally supported the idea of an entity established to "produce new insights as to the meaning and modes of exploring the black experience" while simultaneously addressing shortcomings in campus heterogeneity. One of Berkeley's six black scholars in residence at the time recalled, "there was a legitimate claim to autonomy, legitimate claims to turf [that were] 'pluralistic.'"¹³ On the other hand, most refused to participate directly in the ensuing strike, which began on January 22, 1969. Increasingly strained relations developed between black student activists and the rest of Berkeley's black academic community. Activists labelled them "cowards, fair-weather opportunists, and middle class bourgeoisie [sic] pigs." Efforts to resolve the differences exacerbated the strain as "explanations and rebuttals were countered with more vilification and, in some instances, threats of violence."¹⁴ Nevertheless, black faculty continued their behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts on behalf of a traditionally academic rather than activist Black Studies unit.¹⁵

Several white faculty and administrators also believed Berkeley should expand its offerings in the study of black peoples but doubted the proposal's legitimacy, viability and rationale as well as the competence of its proponents. They expressed dismay that additional scholarly input was not solicited earlier in the revision process. Raymond Kent, Kenneth Stamp, L. Perry Curtis and Woodrow Borah were among Berkeley's history department faculty who gave the administration their written opinions of the document. Kent was quite appalled that "as a member of the Berkeley faculty with a still relatively rare background in African History and History of the Negro in Brazil before 1880 ... [he] could learn of the 'progress' only through the interviews given to the press by the Assistant Chancellor and a graduate student in Criminology!" He also alluded to conversations with two students, an African and an Afro-American, opposed to the AASU's efforts. According to Kent, "the African student did not wish his continent to be subordinated to the predilections of the AASU. The Black American felt that a collective mold was being imposed on her on purely pigmental grounds, grounds she could not accept as an individual." Furthermore, Kent continued, scholars should not subvert the ideal of "academic freedom" by becoming "frightened by the 'changing social forces' into submission to think,

research, and teach according to the predilections of particular community desiderata.”¹⁶ Instead, the rational, objective expertise of concerned resident faculty and scholars should be exploited.

Kenneth Stampf viewed the proposal with suspicion even after he and other interested colleagues discussed it with Andrew Billingsley. They left the meeting, in Stampf’s estimation, “unconvinced” of a “valid intellectual or academic justification for Black Studies.” Stampf felt “insulted” that Heyns and Billingsley seemed more attentive to AASU views than to those of the faculty, particularly the opinions of the Faculty Committee for African Studies. He blamed the Assistant Chancellor for failing to “consult African specialists or those interested in Afro-American history and culture—a group that numbers perhaps thirty members of the present faculty.” He also questioned the black students’ credentials and Billingsley’s expertise. While agreeing that they should be listened to,” Stampf did not believe that they represented “Black intellectuals, the majority of black students, or the black community at large.”¹⁷ The AASU and Billingsley, however, conceded that the new department’s objectives could “be achieved in presently constituted departments, [but] these departments have so far generally failed and that this alone justifies the presently proposed experiment.”¹⁸

L. Perry Curtis distrusted the academic integrity of the program. He compared it to “a Trojan horse to be filled with ‘true believers’ dedicated to the notion or myth that culture and history can be neatly divided along pigmental lines.” The proposition that Black Studies should be “of, by, and for black people” troubled him tremendously. Curtis contended that “Black” or “Afro-American” Studies was semantically untenable because “to blur all the distinctions between African and American Negro cultures (note the plural) with the single word ‘Black’ or the fashionable phrase ‘Afro-American’ . . . violate[s] almost all the canons of intellectual inquiry in an academic setting.” Approval, Curtis argued, could lead to the program becoming “nothing more than a separate compartment run exclusively by a commitment to melanism.” The possibility led him to “despair of the future of this university and all other universities which give credence to the idea that white professors are incapable of teaching ‘relevant’ subjects to ‘Black’ students.”¹⁹

Rather than endorse the AASU/Billingsley document, these faculty members proposed alternate methods of incorporating the study of blacks into Berkeley’s curriculum. Raymond Kent and Woodrow Borah recommended staffing new courses with resident faculty members. Neither favored a Black Studies department nor did they feel a credible program could be organized in less than a year.²⁰ Instead, Kent offered to introduce mandatory freshmen survey courses in “African history and . . . on ‘Racisms in Time Perspective,’ one that would make the young people aware to begin with what racism *is* and was in the Roman Empire, in China, in Indonesia, in Africa of yesterday, and in Black and White America today, and much more besides.”²¹

The conviction that “this whole matter of Black Studies ha[d] been hastily concocted and [would] change rapidly during the coming years” prompted

Woodrow Borah to advocate formation of a Black Studies “group” drawn from existing faculty and potentially viable by fall 1969. Erection of a department presented certain drawbacks in that it would be “far too inflexible and have a vested interest in staying as it was first constituted [leaving Berkeley with a] stone elephant . . . and a staff that would be left behind in 5 years as the studies developed.” Beyond flexibility and expediency, Borah maintained that a “group” composed of proven scholars from traditional disciplines would provide “one fairly effective check on the normal rootlessness of interdisciplinary programs and their tendency to confuse public policy with objective assessment and research.” Support for such a group notwithstanding, he believed that “for most Negroes, the need is . . . for a major enriched by courses in Black Studies through the judicious use of electives.” If education were “a means of social mobility upward,” then Black Studies offered few options since “the needs of our society for people majoring in Black Studies will be limited to teachers, professional agitators, and certain specialized workers in social welfare.”²²

Kenneth Stampp recommended formation of a Center for the Study of Black History and Culture “concerned not only with research but with recruitment, planning curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate levels and . . . interdisciplinary courses in Black Studies.” He envisioned a biracial Center where “every member . . . would have a departmental affiliation” in order to avoid “building a ghetto on campus.” Moreover, he hoped “a distinguished black scholar such as a Kenneth Clark or a John Hope Franklin” might serve as director. Stampp’s Center, along with other recommended alternatives, emphasized the traditional teaching and research missions of the university.²³

To the Afro-American Student Union, however, Black Studies symbolized the education equivalent of black power. Although the student proposal contained provisions for research and instruction, it also maintained active commitments to applied knowledge and service to black communities. Drawing upon “Negro” scholars or Berkeley’s predominantly white existing faculty not only subverted possibilities for placing like-minded Afro-Americans in positions of authority, it also contravened efforts to augment the black presence on campus—an area of deficiency even among resident African and diaspora scholars. The suggestion of Kenneth Clark and John Hope Franklin as acceptable heads for Stampp’s proposed Center exemplified institutional insensitivity to the frustrations motivating the demand for Black Studies. Franklin, a noted historian, preferred that the study of Afro-Americans be undertaken within the confines of orthodox fields. He suspected that the new programs might have more interest in stimulating pride than in objective analysis and proper assessment of “the forces that affect Negro life as well as that of larger society.”²⁴

Kenneth Clark’s research documented the psychological impact of segregation on minority school children in the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, and his commitment to integration conflicted with the black nationalist underpinnings of Black Studies. He resigned from the Board of Trustees of Federal City College once the school approved a black-only Black

Studies program. Clark warned that one should be wary of institutional motivations for establishing Black Studies programs and departments, particularly when such decisions were made in the midst of turmoil. According to Clark,

If a university administration can restore harmony and the image of innovation by a no strings attached financial grant to a separate Black Studies program that may cover a few salaries or subsidize a gas station, it need not move to transform itself into a genuinely non-racial institution dedicated to developing human beings and to helping them develop effective strategies for fundamental social change.²⁵

Berkeley's academic and administrative committees assigned to review the AASU/Billingsley proposal faced a difficult and complex task. Beyond the specific question of suitability lay the pressure of knowing that "whatever policies the University initially establishes for a program in Black Studies will set important and strongly binding precedents for similar programs for other minorities."²⁶ The College of Letters and Science Executive Committee and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) approved the concept in principle. The CEP's November 5, 1968, report, for instance, noted that "insofar as Black Studies are consonant with our current standards and principles of free and disinterested inquiry—however compromised those standards may be in actual practice—there would seem to be no major problems in incorporating Black Studies into the University."²⁷

The apparent endorsement notwithstanding, the Committee found the structure and mission of the proposed department somewhat problematic. Some CEP members broached the possibility of starting with a curriculum rather than a department in order to avoid "any arrangement which will impose at the outset a rigid form and...substance." A curriculum also offered a short-term resolution for committee members reluctant to quickly erect a more formal structure. Anything more should wait until the various committees and the AASU arrived at some consensus about "the more desirable characteristics of a more formal organization." On the other hand, stand-alone curricula were rarely used at Berkeley. The strengths inherent in a departmental structure traditionally lay in relative permanence, ability to draw and retain recruited scholars, implied legitimacy, and potential for development into an entity sufficiently distinguished to "attract necessary foundation support." Ultimately, the CEP did not specify a preferred structural arrangement. Instead, it cautioned consistently against the "use of courses . . . to foster aggressive black militancy and racism" and against any attempt to limit readings to those "produced by black writers, artists, cultures, etc."²⁸

Black Studies' purported functions of promoting positive self-images and racial pride particularly troubled the CEP. Members feared such goals might lead Black Studies personnel to "misrepresent . . . the subject matter by fashioning

from it an image which will subjectively confirm and strengthen the students' self-esteem by giving them a distorted surrogate of the complex and perhaps unpleasant facts." As evidence the committee cited black criticisms of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" as "partly an emotional response to the challenges these documents present to Black self-images . . ." ²⁹

In its December 2 report, the Committee on Educational Policy reached consensus on the premise that "black and other minority studies conducted in accord with our current academic standards . . . can constitute coherent fields of experience and knowledge and that they also comprise a broad range of related subjects susceptible to responsible investigation." ³⁰ This conditional understanding informed the Letters and Science Executive Committee's unanimous decision, reported on January 15, 1969, to sanction a "program in Afro-American Studies leading to the A.B., to commence September 1969." It also encouraged the College Dean, Walter Knight, to appoint an ad hoc Board of Implementation as soon as practicable to recommend a director, recruit faculty members willing to accept joint appointments, organize an academically credible curriculum, and submit a degree-program design to the Executive Committee by April 1. The committee expected faculty representation, yet it only allowed for "informal consultation with non-member faculty and interested students—particularly those who initiated the student proposal." ³¹

The unstructured provision for student input understandably infuriated the Afro-American Student Union, whose proposal Dean Knight acknowledged as "the basis for the . . . recommendation to establish a Black Studies program." ³² The absence of formal student membership on the implementing committee did not bode well for power over a student-initiated idea nor over the operational agenda for the proposed unit. Previous pronouncements and recommendations from University committees demonstrated divergent, almost irreconcilable views on Black Studies form, substance and purpose. Approval of a program rather than a department or College of Ethnic Studies exacerbated suspicions about the University's perceptions of black people as equal and compelling institutional voices. The joint appointment structure appeared to subvert the attainment of the academic black power ideal within the new unit. Not only would faculty have their loyalties divided between the new program and the traditional department, but white dominated, orthodox departments would exercise considerable influence over the Afro-American Studies program by virtue of the relative power inherent in a department.

Following publication of the Committee's report, a coalition of student groups, including the AASU, presented Berkeley's administration with fourteen "non-negotiable" demands. Just prior to the Executive Committee's January 15 announcement, black student activists joined the Mexican-American Student Confederation (MASC) and the Asian-American Political Alliance (AAPA) in an uneasy confederation called the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). The MASC and the AAPA hoped to gain their own ethnic-focused programs and

greater campus visibility through a united front. Several of the TWLF demands pertained specifically to Black Studies: "public and open discussion" of all Black Studies proposals under consideration by the University; black faculty and TWLF representation on the Implementing Committee; addition of community members to advise the reconstituted implementing committee; and formation of a "select committee" made up of predominantly ethnic minority students, administrators and faculty. The select committee's mission would be to "investigate the possibility of creating additional academic structures, including new departments and a college for ethnic minority studies."³³ The Afro-American Student Union insisted on sufficient flexibility "on all matters including curriculum, recruitment of faculty, and student admissions . . . to enable the new Department to meet the felt needs of its constituency." The AASU also demanded College of Letters and Science recognition "at the outset that community-action programs will be an important part of the new curriculum."³⁴ Members of the Asian American Political Alliance and the Mexican-American Student Confederation pressed for their own departments and participation in related discussions.

Unless the Berkeley administration satisfactorily redressed the fourteen demands no later than January 22, the Third World Liberation Front threatened to disrupt campus operations. San Francisco State College, just across the Bay, was already in the throes of a bitter, prolonged strike by its own TWLF. That strike began November 6, 1968, and did not end until the following spring.³⁵ Chancellor Heyns hoped to avoid the same kind of turmoil on the Berkeley campus. He assured continued administrative efforts to "make the institution more responsive to minority students." His pleas that Berkeley not suffer "the agonies of SF State" fell on deaf ears.³⁶

The campus strike began on January 22 and lasted approximately three months. Although Berkeley never closed down completely, classes competed with demonstrations and confrontations between activists and authorities.³⁷ Over time, flagging support and internal divisions within the coalition pushed the TWLF to find a "face-saving" method of ending the strike, especially once the Academic Senate resolved on March 4, 1969, to "favor the establishment of an ethnic studies department reporting directly to the Chancellor and recommend the early appointment of its chairman." The Senate also allowed for future change by asking that the Ethnic Studies departmental structure "be of sufficient flexibility to permit its evolution into a college." This resolution provided the necessary catalyst for negotiations between the Berkeley administrators and the TWLF leadership. Relations between student leaders and minority faculty had deteriorated steadily. Disagreements ranged from the degree of white participation to the length of the strike itself. Approximately one month later, April 7, the strike ended with the announcement that the proposed addition received the requisite administrative approvals. It would "begin instruction in the Fall Quarter 1969."³⁸

From the initial student proposal to the final approvals, most debate centered upon whether to institutionalize Black Studies and how to expedite the end of the

“state of emergency” on campus. Transforming Afro-American Studies from an abstract concept to a concrete programmatic reality proved more difficult than either detractors or proponents expected. Conflicting opinions about acceptable degrees of conformity with traditional academic programs, definitions of legitimate scholarship and appropriate levels of community participation threatened the internal operation of the program.

Ongoing internal and external disputes about power fueled speculation that the Black Studies experiment would be shortlived. A student-led boycott of Afro-American Studies during the spring and summer of 1972 almost struck a mortal blow. By that time, Albert Bowker had succeeded Heyns as University chancellor. Ronald Lewis, formerly affiliated with the School of Social Welfare, served as Afro-American Studies program coordinator from 1970-1972. Except for one or two newly appointed ladder-rank faculty, graduate students and lecturers comprised the teaching staff.

During the spring of 1972, Bowker notified Ronald Lewis that his term as program coordinator would end on July 1. According to Bowker’s public statements, the reasons for Lewis’ dismissal included “no confidence in the present administration of the Afro-American Studies program” and “fail[ure] to attract permanent full-time faculty and build an academic program.”³⁹ The Committee on Undergraduate Courses (CUC), responsible for reviewing and approving proposed courses, had already refused to work with Lewis prior to his termination. Its members charged that the program’s class proposals consistently arrived too late to permit “any reasonable scrutiny.” Consequently, CUC Chair Stanley Berger maintained, the program allowed students to enroll in courses before the CUC rendered a judgement. The Committee frequently approved Afro-American Studies courses after the fact, a tactic Berger characterized as coercive.⁴⁰ Lewis, on the other hand, felt that the Committee’s accusations were unjustified. He countercharged that a double-standard seemed to apply to Afro-American Studies because,

for every other department, courses are approved just once and then you just proceed with them. The committee on Courses reviewed ours every quarter term. We had more courses than the other Ethnic Studies units, and it kept our courses out of the catalog for three years. We had more obstacles than other departments. For three years our department had double procedures. We had never been told our courses were deficient. We invited anyone to monitor our classes. If we were told of a bad instructor we would be the first to kick him out.⁴¹

In addition to the breakdown in relations with the CUC, rumors circulated concerning mismanagement of the program’s resources and dissatisfaction with the unit’s curricular focus. Lewis rejected allegations that connected him with financial impropriety and challenged the administration to “tell the public about

any evidence of wrong-doing.” He also rejected unsolicited advice that the program emphasize liberal arts rather than science and technology. Lewis contended that it was “not good that 85 percent of black students on this campus are enrolled in Liberal Arts . . . We don’t think that addresses the problems of the black community.” Instead, his goal was to encourage students to major in physics or math “with pre-courses which would have given them better skills.”⁴²

Without consulting other program staff, Bowker named Psychology and Afro-American Studies professor William Banks as Lewis’ successor. In light of the problems with Afro-American Studies, according to an unidentified university spokesman, it was “understandable” that Bowker “would not turn to the program for advice on reforming and improving it.”⁴³ Had Banks refused the appointment, Bowker felt he could not support the program’s continuation. Banks accepted the position contingent upon assurances he would have a free hand in curriculum development and faculty recruitment, and a guarantee that the program would suffer no budgetary cutbacks for the next five years.⁴⁴

In the short run, the transition from Ronald Lewis to William Banks sparked more controversy than it resolved. The Afro-American Student Union, community members and program faculty and staff resented the process used to terminate Lewis as well as its implications for possible programmatic change. Black student activists protested against the “unilateral action taken by the racist administration of the university [without] participation from either faculty or student representatives, or members of the larger community who have been in support of the developing program of Afro-American Studies.” They launched a petition drive denouncing the Chancellor’s action and demanding Banks’ resignation. Lewis’ reinstatement was not an issue. Members of the Afro-American Studies program, Berkeley Mayor Warren Widener, San Francisco Assemblyman Willie Brown and others objected to Bowker’s decision, which was characterized as having been made “in true plantation style.”⁴⁵

Beyond petitions and pickets against Chancellor Bowker, students also demonstrated their displeasure with William Banks and his plans for Afro-American Studies. Banks’ proposal to relocate the program’s administrative home was one point of contention. The settlement that ended the 1969 TWLF strike placed the Ethnic Studies department directly under the control of the Chancellor’s Office. Comparable academic units reported to one of the University’s colleges; in this case, the College of Letters and Science. Ideally, Banks hoped for development of a separate College of Ethnic Studies. In the interim, he believed that “a division within the College of Letters and Science would be preferable to the department’s present status.”⁴⁶

Students organized a boycott of Banks’ two summer session classes. Actual enrollment dropped significantly from pre-enrollment figures for the first course. Insufficient advanced enrollment in the second resulted in its cancellation.⁴⁷ According to Bettye Brumfield, chairperson of the Committee to Boycott Afro-American Studies, the Chancellor’s actions demonstrated “Bowker’s blatant disregard for the legitimate aspirations . . . of black people.” Strikers expected the

boycott to draw attention to their demand that “Chancellor Albert H. Bowker be removed from his office for attempting to oppose the self-determination of black students of this campus.”⁴⁸

The boycott expanded to include all courses offered by the Afro-American Studies program during the fall quarter of 1972. It succeeded in substantially reducing class size in Afro-American Studies. However, it failed to accomplish the intended long-term objectives. The total number of registered students fell from approximately “421 in Fall 1971 to 93 in Fall of 1972,” an estimated 78 percent drop in the program’s enrollment compared with the previous fall term. As support for continuing the boycott through the winter and spring quarters steadily waned, enrollment increased slowly during the remainder of the academic year.⁴⁹

Banks neither resigned nor compromised his position concerning the future direction of Berkeley’s Afro-American Studies program. He replaced the part-time lecturers with ladder-rank scholars. He also substituted a cohesive academic plan for the “ad hoc” curriculum in preparation for gaining departmental status within the College of Letters and Science. Previously, according to an informant familiar with the program between 1969 and 1972, the range of courses encompassed “anything from literature to ‘gun-fu.’”⁵⁰ Moreover, internal divisions flourished around the extent to which the program should conform to traditional expectations and around determining the “appropriate role” for community involvement. According to a former graduate assistant in the program, faculty meetings “were held on week-ends and were open to anyone. Anyone who came had a vote. Meetings started late and ended late; it was draining and debilitating.”⁵¹ Development of a strong and credible program and recruitment of reputable faculty were the tasks Banks confronted. Failure would likely lead to the program’s dissolution.⁵²

The Berkeley administration approved a degree-granting Afro-American Studies Department housed in the College of Letters and Science in 1974. By then, most of the students who participated in the original strike had either graduated or left the University. The principle objections to Afro-American Studies’ change in status and administrative home came from the other components of Ethnic Studies. As the largest unit in the department, Afro-American Studies’ departure from Ethnic Studies proved a severe setback to future prospects for building a College of Third World or Ethnic Studies.⁵³ Indeed, the College concept never received approval, despite the persistent efforts of the Department of Ethnic Studies throughout the 1970s.⁵⁴ Berkeley’s Afro-American Studies program survived its initial period of internal and external conflict. After more than twenty years in operation, however, many of the concerns attendant during the Black Studies movement remain unresolved.

At Berkeley and on predominantly white campuses generally, reforms proposed and demanded by black activists in the late 1960s emphasized erasing what they perceived as institutional irrelevance through increased numbers of Afro-Americans at all academic levels, and ending institutional impotence

through autonomous units within which black partisans determined their own agenda and set their own priorities. At best, Black Studies was represented as a panacea for higher education's racial problematic. At worst, Black Studies became a piece of turf on which competing political interests vied for control.

As academic units Afro-American Studies programs could do little to meet the practical needs of "the community." Lack of consensus concerning the substantive academic content of a Black Studies curriculum weakened many programs and departments. Furthermore, the manner in which many programs were left unchecked at the outset while administrators attended to other elements of campus unrest allowed certain misunderstandings and procedural irregularities to fester until campuses returned to operational normalcy. Most programs that survived their infancy made mid-course corrections in structure, staff and substance in a manner more consistent with traditional academic programs and departments.⁵⁵

The late 1970s through 1980s witnessed a precipitous decline in both the numbers of Black Studies programs nationally and in the proportion of university-affiliated African-American faculty.⁵⁶ Once again the relative scarcity of black people in higher education attracted the attention of campus activists. At Stanford University, for instance, members of the Students of Color Coalition held a sit-in to dramatize demands for required ethnic studies courses and increased minority faculty hires. A few months earlier, the campus had been embroiled in controversy about recasting Western Civilization courses to reflect the influences of non-Western peoples.⁵⁷ A demonstration at Michigan State University supported an improved racial climate and greater emphasis on minority recruitment.⁵⁸

Renewed demands for "greater" and "more" did not go unchallenged. Debate about the quality of minority scholars and scholarship, and the efficacy of recruitment reflected growing skepticism concerning the benefits of diversity. The purpose of the November 1988 meeting of the National Association of Scholars, for example, was to "provide a forum" for professors frustrated with "affirmative action that ignores merit, teaching that is tainted by political ideology, and an academic climate that is hostile to conservatives."⁵⁹ Temple University officially sanctioned the formation of a new campus group, the "White Student Union," organized to "promote white culture and pride and abolish affirmative action."⁶⁰ On the other hand, Temple hosts the only doctoral program in Afro-American Studies in the country.

The approval, establishment and proliferation of Black Studies at the university level in the 1960s appeared to signal the validation of a liberal arts and social science curriculum that included more constituencies than it previously omitted. The ensuing evolution of various ethnic and gender studies programs seemed to guarantee acceptance of the expansion of legitimate areas of intellectual inquiry, irrespective of the shortcomings of race, ethnic- or gender-focused programs and departments. The proposition that cultural studies might, at most, play an ancillary rather than equal role in American education retards instruction

and research. Conceptually, the debate over the desirability of casting the intellectual net to include a wider range of race, class, gender and ethnic constituencies was already conceded. The unresolved issues of both the 1960s and the 1990s were and are whether cultural and gender studies are ancillary or equal in importance in comparison to Western civilization, whether greater familiarity with cultural and/or gender studies marks one as less qualitatively educated than the student of Western culture. Columnist George Will, for instance, assumes the need to “do justice to the full range and richness of America’s cultural heritage.” However, he continues,

. . . justice begins with truth, and the fundamental truth is that the ideas and institutions that undergird our commonality—our organic life as one body politic—came from Europe. . . . ‘Eurocentricity’ is right, in American curricula and consciousness because it accords with the facts of our history, and we—and Europe—are fortunate for that. The political and moral legacy of Europe has made the most happy and admirable nations. Saying that may be indelicate, but it has the merit of being true and the truth should be the core of any curriculum.⁶¹

To the degree that Will’s position is currently pervasive in American higher education, then the status of surviving Black Studies programs remains precarious not only because of their turbulent start, difficulties arriving at consensus, or deliberations concerning a core curriculum and a disciplinary *raison d’être*. The entrenched belief that subsumes all but European culture under the banner of “adversarial pedagogy,” or “victimology” portends persistent conflict between traditional curricula and Black Studies as well as with its ethnic, gender and non-European area studies counterparts.⁶²

Notes

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1. For the purposes of this article, Black Studies is used interchangeably with Afro-American Studies, although historically, semantically and politically the terms were not necessarily viewed synonymously by advocates and opponents of the institutionalization of the field.

2. Arthur L. Smith, cited in Nick Aaron Ford, *Black Studies: Threat or Challenge?* (Port Washington, New York, 1972), 2.

3. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York, 1987), 314.

4. *Ibid.*, 319.
5. David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca, New York, 1986), 211-212.
6. See also Charles J. Sykes, *Profscam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education* (Washington, D.C., 1988) and Charles A. Radin, "Conservatives Send Their Agenda to Colleges," *Boston Globe*, November 12, 1990, 1, 64.
7. E.D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York, 1987), xii.
8. Afro-American Student Union, "Proposal for Afro-American Studies" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, April 1968), 3, 4.
9. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Kenneth Stampf to Roger Heyns, November 21, 1968; L. Perry Curtis to Roger Heyns, November 21, 1968; Roger Heyns to L. Perry Curtis, November 18, 1968: Correspondence (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, 1968).
12. David Blackwell, *et al.*, "Statement of the Black Faculty and Administrators on the Current University Conflict," November 4, 1968 (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, 1968). Twenty-eight black faculty and graduate students signed the statement.
13. Interview with Troy Duster, Institute for the Study of Social Change, University of California, Berkeley, August 16, 1986.
14. Patrick Hayashi, "The Institutional Accommodation of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley From 1969 to 1972" (Berkeley: University of California Asian-American Studies Library, 1972).
15. Duster, Interview; Blackwell, "Statement."
16. Raymond Kent to Walter Knight, Committee on Educational Policy, December 11, 1968, Correspondence (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, 1968).
17. Stampf, Correspondence.
18. Billingsley, "Proposal."
19. Curtis, Correspondence. In his letter to Roger Heyns, Curtis placed quotation marks around "Black" and "Afro-American" because he found himself "disturbed . . . no end by the use of the term 'Black' [and the] fashionable phrase 'Afro-American'." The use of either was semantically untenable and a passing fad which "blur[red] all the distinctions between African and American Negro cultures."
20. Borah, Correspondence; Kent, Correspondence.
21. Kent, Correspondence.
22. Borah, Correspondence.
23. Stampf, Correspondence. Raymond Kent requested that if Stampf's proposed Center for the Study of Black History and Culture were adopted, "it be named so as *not* to have the 'Afro' prefix. It is a most synthetic one." (Kent to Walter Knight and the Executive Committee of the College of Letters and Science, Correspondence, December 11, 1968).
24. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980* (Urbana, Illinois, 1986), 120. Franklin's work, like that of Kenneth Clark, was used to support the NAACP legal defense in the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* case. More than a persistent supporter of integration, Franklin remained vigilant of the danger of missing advocacy and scholarship. See his 1963 essay, "The Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar," reprinted in *Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938-1988* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1989), 295-308.
25. Kenneth Clark, "A Charade of Power: Black Students at White Colleges," in John Blassingame, ed., *New Perspectives on Black Studies* (Urbana, Illinois, 1971), 118.
26. Committee on Educational Policy, "Programs in Black and Other Minority Groups Studies" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, November 18, 1968), 14.
27. Committee on Educational Policy, "Programs in Black Studies" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, November 5, 1968), 2, 4.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Committee on Educational Policy, "Programs in Black and Other Minority Group Studies" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, December 2, 1968), 5-6.
30. CEP, "Programs" (December 2, 1968), 2.
31. Executive Committee, "To the Faculty of the College of Letters and Science" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, January 15, 1969), 1.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Hayashi, 21.
34. *Ibid.*

35. Helene Whitson, *Strike: A Chronology, Bibliography, and List of Archival Materials Concerning the 1968-1969 Strike at San Francisco State College* (Washington, D.C., 1970), 27.
36. Roger W. Heyns, "To Students, Staff, Faculty, and Friends of the University" (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, 1969), 3-4.
37. W.J. Rorabaugh's *Berkeley At War: The 1960s* (New York, 1989) provides a useful overview of ancillary issues related to the decentralization of institutional power and New Left political unrest at Berkeley during this period.
38. Roger Heyns, "Statement by Chancellor Roger W. Heyns." (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, April 1969).
39. Larry Spears, "The Quiet Man in Middle of U.C.'s Black Boycott," *Oakland Tribune* (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, 1972).
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. Mitch Clogg, "BSU Will Boycott Afro-Studies Program," *Daily Californian*, August 24, 1972.
44. Interview with William Banks, Department of Afro-American Studies, University of California, Berkeley, November 16, 1982.
45. Clogg, "BSU Will Boycott . . ."
46. *Ibid.*
47. Maria Lenhart, "Black Studies Turmoil: Offices Locked," *Daily Californian*, July 6, 1972; Spears, "Quiet War."
48. "BSU Gains, Loses Endorsements," *Daily Californian*, September 28, 1972.
49. "Afro-Studies Boycott Continued by BSU," *Daily Californian*, January 4, 1973.
50. Interview with Margaret Wilkerson, Department of Afro-American Studies, University of California, Berkeley, August 4, 1986.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Banks, Interview.
53. J.R. Whinnery, Correspondence, Council for Special Curricula to Albert H. Bowker (Berkeley: University of California Chancellor's Record Office, April 23, 1972).
54. William Banks, 1982; Whinnery, 1972.
55. Among recent examples are Maulana Ron Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles, 1983); Gerald A. McWorter and Ronald Bailey, "Black Studies Curriculum Development in the 1980s: Patterns of Consensus, Conflict, and Change," *Afro Scholar Working Papers* 17 (Urbana, Illinois, 1984); Nathan I. Huggins, *Afro-American Studies: A Report to the Ford Foundation* (New York, 1985); *Journal of Negro Education* [Special Issue on Black Studies] 53 (Summer 1984); National Council for Black Studies, *Black Studies Core Curriculum* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1981).
56. Alan King Colon, "A Critical Review of Black Studies Programs" (Ph.D dissertation, Stanford University, 1980), 9.
57. "President's Office Held by Student Protestors," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 14, 1989, a-2.
58. "Sit-in at Michigan State," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 14, 1989, a-2.
59. Carolyn Mooney, "Conservative Scholars Call for a Movement to 'Reclaim' Academy," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 23, 1988, a-1, a-11.
60. "'White Pride' Group Recognized by Temple U," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 14, 1989, a-2.
61. George Will, "Never Mind Cultural Rhetoric, Schools Should Teach Truth," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 23, 1989, sec. 1, 8.
62. *Ibid.*

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