CONVERSATION WITH TOM SEAVERS

Told him I have sent requests for 7 courses to the pertinent chairmen, without expressing my own reservations...that I wanted to express my reservations to him before expressing them to faculty.

1) I don't believe in undergraduates' teaching courses and will resist it. In this I know I am speaking for Faculty as well as myself.

2) I do believe, strongly, in the use of students to assist in teaching courses, but I think only a very small number of our students are qualified to do this well (perhaps 5%), and their proposals assume a lot more black students will be used than I think ASO can muster to do the job properly.

3) Courses for black students have two purposes which seem to me to be in conflict: 1) they can provide black students something which is their own in an environment many of them find alien, and 2) they can provide education insofar as the first may really be needed, I favor one or two black courses as a temporary or stop-gap measure, but I don't want it assumed they are providing good education, because: 1) I think if anyone should be studying Afro-American History, lit., etc., it is the whites, and if there is anything the blacks should be learning about it is the white culture, and 2) black power means nothing to me if it does not mean getting more and more blacks into positions of leadership in American education, business, government, professions. I do not think this is educationally achieved by creating black islands inside white colleges.

4) Because of 1) immediately above if we are to provide some black courses to give blacks something of their own, something to be proud of, a sense of security. I want: 1) a clear policy on whether they are to be open to whites - no pretense of openness but de-facto segregation, and 2) I want such courses thought of as a palliative only, while we take steps toward better answers.

5) The real problem does not seem to me to lie in course offerings or syllabi. It lies in the fact that white higher education is no longer enrolling a few Negroes from the black bourgeoisie but a lot of kids from a very different culture. Motivation, relevance, and the meanings of a lot of symbols are more different than we are fully aware. Changes in course content must be accompanied by more understanding of what these new students need, and this is not to be achieved by our present practice of pulling off into corners and writing memos to each other. What we need is people talking with each other. I want black students and whites - faculty students and administrators telling each other how they feel about courses, teaching, requirements, etc. person-to-person.

Laurence Barrett
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