

February 17, 1970

Robert D. Cross
Swarthmore College President

Dear President Cross:

SASS finds it necessary to reject your offer of locating Lodges 5 and 6 as the site for the Black Cultural Center. There are several reasons why we find your proposal untenable:

- 1) the increased black population expected at Swarthmore will require a larger facility
- 2) structural inadequacies, e.g., the use of downstairs kitchens, the tunnel system, limitation on both aesthetic and functional possibilities
- 3) location: lack of privacy, noise considerations, etc.

More important, however, is our dismay over the attitudes your proposals represent. And we feel that this implies serious complications for the future of black/white relations at Swarthmore. At the crux of the matter is the basic issue of priorities. The necessary resources for more adequate facilities are in fact available, but it appears that the College is unwilling to provide them for what the Black student population feels ought to be one of the overriding commitments of this white institution. This very apparent lack of sensitivity is fast alienating Black students; it is quite obvious that you do not consider an adequately equipped and situated Cultural Center the dire necessity that it is.

Now: we are aware of a growing conviction in the Black community that participating and attempting to cooperate inside white institutions in hope of a viable pluralistic mode of existence is a delusion; rather, it is imperative, if Black people are to construct meaningful realities for themselves, to separate and create autonomous structures. SASS has been debating these assertions all year. Unfortunately, your letter seems to be an indication that such assertions have some credence, i.e., liberals are forever bullshitting.

An excellent example is the College's suggestion that the lodges be "doctored up". This is the familiar white liberal solution: the use of piecemeal and stop gap measures, measures that do not acknowledge the necessity of the re-organization of an institution's priorities and modus operandi for dealing with the white master's problem vis a vis Black slaves; there is repulsive symbolic significance in the suggestion that lodge 4 be "fixed up" as cheaply as possible to accomodate the very real and increasingly pressing needs of the Black community here.

Another example of liberal reasoning is the desire of the College to have its Black Cultural House located in the center of the campus. It is our belief that the location be where the best facilities are. We have no desire to and reject the idea that it would be 'nice' to be on display for White America anytime, anywhere. Here again we find your symbolic reasoning unacceptable.

Furthermore, the rationale that there will be limited space next year might be re/ viewed in light of:

- 1) the changed draft policy (releasing more students to non-college activities) which should liberate more space than is presently anticipated
- 2) provisions for an expanded off-campus housing policy, which would obviously lessen the campus facilities shortage

And,

- 3) the College has demonstrated inadequate planning in expanding general student enrollment without first making provisions for a Black Cultural House; if a few less students are admitted than are presently intended, perhaps sufficient dormitory space will be available to allow a more adequate facility to be allocated for the Black Cultural House.

Moreover, SASS completely rejects the idea that we obtain funds from Student Council (read: white students). It is degrading enough to negotiate with an adult white power structure for satisfaction of basic needs, but when this authority is passed on to the sons and daughters of our white slave masters the situation is intolerable.

Finally, we are sorry that your letter seemingly indicates the beginning of a strain in the moral and political relationships of the College and its Black student members. Unless provisions are made for the creation and maintenance of a meaningful, viable Black existence here, we will be unable to cooperate with the College. This act of refusal may take any form. For we are not now talking about Black students fitting into the structure of White Swarthmore, but rather of Swarthmore College with a thriving institutionalized Black component. We are disinclined to hold further discussions, as past discussions have proved to be less than productive: we are no longer interested in amiable attempts at false appeasement. We want real solutions. We urge you to immediately reconsider your entire perspective on these matters.

Respectfully,

SASS