

Sept. 2, 1971

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is almost universally felt that apathy, bureaucratic disorder, and lack of direction have crippled SASS. These problems have perennially plagued the organization, and BSU's in general. This past year the situation was particularly bad: the steering committee resigned; a small fraction of the years budget was spent because no committees functioned as effectively as they should have in developing programs; Black Studies made virtually no progress; no significant political education took place, and what little there was tended towards indoctrination or bullshitting rather than education ( learning ); even the House decorating is still incomplete.

Several of us, in the face of an interest vacuum, appointed ourselves saviors of SASS. We had to do this because we felt that an active Black political organization absolutely essential to us, in terms of learning the things that the times dictate we must learn. It is not only wasteful, but perhaps "counter revolutionary" to forsake the opportunity we have to exploit each other and Swarthmore the institution in a political, pragmatic way. On essence, we feel cheated and resentful when something we deem so important is taken so lightly and allowed to stagnate in ineffectiveness.

So our answer is to redefine the organization. It ( SASS ) must be characterised by

- emphasis on study and examination of the problems we face, and possible solutions to the problems.
- Black Studies = political education.
- programs, programs, programs. Both on campus and in the community.
- disdain for rhetoric and bullshit.
- efficiency. The people who are dedicated enough, concerned enough, and active enough to make the thing work must have the power and organizational unity to enable them to get something done. Yet all Blacks on campus must be actively encouraged to contribute their resources/ideas/manpower, and become more active.

In other words, efficiency without elitism and discipline without asking total loss of individuality to an artificial political organization. - the organization must not presume that there is now one coherent, viable revolutionary philosophy. No person must be force-fed a dogma. We must study the problems, examining alternatives --- asking questions and trying to answer them, rather than shouting philosophy at each other.

For the above reasons we propose the following constitution. People who contributed to the actual draft ( although many others came up with the basic ideas at the end of last semester ) include

James Batton  
Sherry Bellamy  
Linda Datcher  
Chris Edley  
Nick Elam  
Val Gilliam  
Roscoe Green  
Andy Henderson  
Bill Kirk

Voting and all that mess will take place shortly after everyone gets back on campus. Please think about this carefully.

Umoja

Constitution  
of the  
Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society

I. Preamble: The goals of this organization.

Survival and fulfillment have always been themes of human existence, but never so acutely as they have been and are themes of Black existence in America. Many peoples have endured enslavement, but few forms of subjugation were as inhuman as ours was. Many people have known poverty and prejudice, but none have felt them in the midst of the wealth and idealism characteristic of America.

Yet we have shown that while there may be both overt and subtle oppression, enslavement, and murder, there can be no degradation of a black soul: survival and fulfillment are the pillars of our religion. This religion, or spirituality, has enabled us to resist all attempts to enslave the souls of Black folk.

As an organization, then, the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society (SASS) must be directed towards survival and fulfillment. We must see that personal fulfillment is greatest when it is identified with the fulfillment of the needs and hopes of our people. And it then follows that education is of primary importance, because more than total unity as a people is typified by our disagreement over methods, tactics, and goals for the liberation struggle. So as an organization of Black individuals in an academic setting, it is our responsibility to abandon the rhetorics and dogmas of the past and use all our resources and energies to study the alternatives to second class membership in a racist society.

Our time spent at Swarthmore is potentially revolutionary in the sense that education and the programs of this organization can and must be



directed towards defining and gaining the tools that will enable each of us individually to effectively dedicate his life to the fulfillment and liberation of every Black man and woman, thereby fulfilling and liberating himself.

With these political and educational goals in mind, SASS must necessarily be concerned with developing programs and projects which touch on every aspect of our education, community, and nature. The larger Black community surrounding Swarthmore must be involved in every way possible in our programs, just as our educational and cultural involvement must include community-related projects.

Success in our grand, idealistic endeavors is clearly contingent upon overcoming the obstacles to survival that white society has erected. These obstacles are a manifestation of that same oppression which motivates the political emphasis we must place upon everything we do: and there is so much to do.

At Swarthmore the obstacles are more subtle than they were in our communities. A Swarthmore education is intrinsically sterile, brainwashing, and politically debilitating. SASS must help the Black people on campus to reject white standards of bourgeois academic purity and translate a sterile, white-washed education into a tool for our struggle.

In one sense the great responsibility each of us has to fully develop his potential and then apply himself is an advantage. While white society and white students are frequently directionless and unmotivated, we have a direction and a task forced on us. Black people do not have to search for or invent something to do with their lives. There is so much to do.

## II. Membership.

SASS is a political, educational, and social organization, whose membership consists of all black students at Swarthmore College. This larger organization of the black student community shall be divided into two basic categories: active members and inactive members.

### A. General privileges of SASS members (i.e. all black students at Swarthmore)

1. Attendance and participation at all general SASS meetings and meetings of various committees of the society, except in cases where the steering committee of the society declares a particular meeting open to active members only, or in cases where the active membership of a committee declares a particular meeting of that committee open to active members only.
2. To contribute in any and all ways to the efforts of the society to develop innovative ideas, programs, projects for the benefit of the black student body, and the larger black community. The active membership shall not construe its participatory status as a monopoly on ideas or resources.

### B. Active Membership.

1. Responsibilities shall include:
  - a) payment of \$3.00 in dues per semester, in accordance with a schedule fixed by the treasurer.
  - b) attendance at all general SASS meetings unless a sufficiently urgent forbids. The Communications and Membership Committee reserves the right to request an explanation for continued absences by an active member.
  - c) active involvement in a committee of the society. This shall be interpreted in terms of attendance at meetings and participation in the proposal, planning and implementation stages of projects and programs involving the black community.
2. Privileges shall include:
  - a) voting at all general meetings of the organization and at meetings of the committees of which the individual is a member.
  - b) holding elected and appointed offices.

### III. Officers

Officers of the organization shall include: The members of the Steering Committee, the chairmen of the standing committees, the Minister of Finance, the Treasurer, and four Secretaries. All offices above are elective except Treasurer.

- A. The principle organ for executive functions shall be the STEERING COMMITTEE. (see art.)
- B. The chairmen of each standing committee is responsible for communicating the activities of his committee on a weekly basis, in writing, to the Communications and Membership Committee and to the Steering Committee. This is in addition to the performance of functions generally associated with the position of committee chairman. The weekly report of activity must be specific and complete, and must be submitted whether or not the committee has met as a unit.
  1. The committee chairman is responsible for organizing, coordinating, and communicating the activities of any formal subcommittees or informal task forces whose area of activity lies within the scope of the larger standing committee. Both the committee membership and the chairman are accountable for inactivity and ineffectiveness.
  2. Gross inactivity or ineffectiveness, as determined by the Steering Committee or the general active membership shall be considered as grounds for removal from office as a committee chairman.  
(majority vote needed)
- C. The Minister of Finance shall serve on the Steering Committee and shall be specifically responsible for all aspects of the finances of the organization, as well as the financial liason with the college administration.
- D. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Steering Comm. on a yearly basis to assist the Minister of Finance in maintaining all financial records. Specific duties of the Treasurer shall include the collection of dues and the maintenance of a financial liason with the Student Council.
- E. Four Secretaries shall be elected to serve as members of the Communications and Membership Committee, and shall be responsible for:
  1. Minutes of all general meetings of SASS, Steering Committee meetings and meetings of the Communications and Membership Committee.
  2. Records of membership status, committee activities and the organization as required.
  3. Assisting the Steering Committee as requested.



#### IV. Elections

- A. Only active members may vote in elections or serve as officers.
- B. Elections shall take place near the end of each school year. All SASS members shall be notified of upcoming elections at least one week before the opening of the nominations. Voting must occur within one week of the closing of nominations.
  1. Election procedures shall be conducted by retiring members of the Steering Committee.
- C. Candidates must place themselves in nomination for any of: chairman of a specific standing committee, Minister of Finance, Secretary.
  1. The four candidates receiving the greatest number of votes for Secretary shall become Secretaries. The one candidate receiving the greatest number of votes for Minister of Finance shall become Minister of Finance.
  2. For each specific committee chairmanship:
    - a) The candidate receiving the greatest number of votes shall become a member of the Steering Committee, and be directly responsible for the coordination of the activities relating to that particular area which is in the realm of the given standing committee for which he nominated himself.
    - b) The candidate receiving the greatest number of votes shall become chairman of that committee.
  3. As an exception to the above, in the cases concerning the Communications and Membership Committee:
    - a) The candidate receiving the greatest number of votes shall become a member of the Steering Committee and serve as Chairman of the Steering Committee.
    - b) The candidate receiving the second greatest number of votes, in addition to becoming chairman of the Communications and Membership Committee, shall also serve on the Steering Committee. He shall be responsible for coordination of activities relating to the area of communications and membership.
- D. Offices not filled by election, due to a lack of candidates, and offices vacated by resignations, shall be filled by appointment by the Steering Committee, subject to ratification by the active membership.

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V. Impeachment.

- A. Any person serving in an elected or appointed position may be impeached and removed from office.
- B. Charges for impeachment may be presented by any active member at a general meeting or a special meeting as provided.
  - 1. Charges must be considered for three days, and then voted upon by the active membership. A two-thirds vote is necessary to remove an officer from his office, with the exceptions:
    - a) A committee chairman may be removed by majority vote as per article III sec. B clause 2., by either the Steering Committee or the general body.
- C. Vote of Confidence in the Steering Committee.
  - 1. A vote of confidence in the Steering Committee may be called at any general meeting at the request of a petition by ten active members of the organization. A two-thirds vote of no-confidence is necessary to remove the entire Steering Committee.
    - a) In the event of the removal of the entire Steering Committee, elections for an interim Committee to serve until spring shall be held generally and conducted by the Secretaries.
- D. Offices vacated due to impeachment shall be filled by appointment by the Steering Committee, with ratification by the active membership, except in a case where the entire Steering Committee has been impeached, in which case the Secretaries shall initiate elections for an interim Committee.
- E. All impeachment charges must be presented in writing to the Communications and Membership Committee prior to the meeting at which the charges are to be considered.



VI. Committees and Committee Functions.

- A. The standing committees of this organization shall be :
- Library and Education
  - Admissions and Orientation
  - Umoja
  - Black Studies
  - House ( Black Cultural Center ) Coordinating
  - Communications and Membership

In addition, there shall be a Steering Committee.

B. Membership.

1. The Steering Committee shall be composed of the eight students determined as per article IV, and five adults. The adults shall be:

- the assistant dean in charge of Black affairs.
- the director of the Black Studies Program.
- the assistant dean of admissions in charge of Black admissions.
- two other members of the adult Black community, as selected by the other members of the committee

2. In addition to the chairman of the standing committee and the Steering Committee member attached to that standing committee ( both of whom are determined as per article IV. ), all SASS members shall be actively encouraged to participate in the activities and operations of the standing committees. Participation on some standing committee is mandatory for active members of the organization. The Communications and Membership committee shall periodically request active membership lists from each of the standing committees.

- a) The active membership of each standing committee shall have the authority to limit voting privileges within that committee to active members only, with the approval of the Steering Committee.

C. Functions of the Committees.

1. Steering Committee.

- a) shall recommend policy and actions for approval by the general body.
- b) shall coordinate activities of the organization and see that all divisions function properly.
- c) shall review all public statements and correspondence; shall act as SASS's spokesman before the college administration and community.
- d) shall make emergency decisions when the general

body cannot be consulted, provided that the general body is informed of the action as soon as possible.  
e) shall be alert and responsive to any development on campus or in the surrounding communities which is relevant to SASS or Black people in general.  
f) shall review and approve budget expenditures and shall prepare the budget for the following school year.

2. Admissions and Orientation.

a) shall work in close conjunction with the Black admissions officer to develop and carry out plans for the recruitment and orientation of new (incoming) students.

b) shall work towards developing a policy for the organization regarding the ideal or preferred characteristics and qualifications of perspective freshmen.

c) shall be alert and responsive to any developments relating to the admissions and scholarships area which may have an effect upon the Swarthmore's Black community.

3. Library and Education.

a) shall be responsible for the Black Cultural Center Library. This includes all aspects of policy, facilities, materials, purchasing, operations, etc.

b) shall help the organization and its members keep abreast of all publications relevant to our goals and purpose. This includes working with the Black Studies committee to develop reading lists and syllabi for courses, workshops and symposia.

c) shall undertake (at least once a year) an overall evaluation of Swarthmore courses and professors with an eye toward

-investigating occurrences of racism.

-determining the relative merits of courses and instructors.

-giving a critique of the Black Studies Program.

4. Black Studies.

a) shall work in conjunction with the Black Studies Director and the Black teaching staff to develop a Black Studies Program which is both academically and politically potent. This broad task shall include

-formulating both specific goals and a guiding philosophy for Swarthmore Black Studies.



-examining alternative educational and administrative formats which might be incorporated into our Black Studies; e.g., course structures, staff hiring procedures, curricular innovations.  
 -development of specific courses, lecture series programs, workshops, etc., to carry out whatever educational and political goals may be defined. This in the organization of student-run courses and cooperation with Moja in planning programs.  
 -constant consideration of and recommendations of ways to make Swarthmore education meaningful and useful to Black people.

b) shall work with the Black Studies Director to institute exchange programs with other colleges and universities, particularly in Africa and the West Indies.

5. Umoja .

a) shall stress the physical and spiritual involvement in the culture of Black people by arranging cultural and social activities which express the artistic nature of our people.

b) shall initiate and coordinate activities involving the surrounding Black communities and alumni. Umoja shall also address itself to unifying Blacks on campus through programs and workshops.

6. House Coordinating

a) shall help coordinate activities of the other committees which must take place in the Cultural Center.

b) be generally responsible for the physical arrangements of all programs, including guest accommodations and transportation, and sound systems.

c) shall be responsible for the decorating and physical upkeep of the House. (including security)

d) shall review all programs of the organization with an eye towards insuring that

-there is efficient and extensive use of the House.

-programs involving the neighboring communities are sufficiently diverse and effective.

e) shall have at least one of its members attached to each of the other standing committees to serve as liaison.

7. Communications and Membership.

a) shall serve as the general information agency



of the organization.

- b) shall print and distribute notices of meetings, programs, etc.
- c) shall print copies of the minutes of general meetings and steering committee meetings, and make them available to all Black students.
- d) shall print a monthly notice to all Black students describing the activities of each standing committee, discussions of the Steering Committee, and important announcements.
- e) shall keep the SASS office orderly, and be responsible for maintaining the files and records of the organization.
- f) shall have at least one member attached to each of the other standing committees to serve as liaison.
- g) shall work with committees to organize the publicity for any programs of the organization.
- h) shall maintain rigorous standards for active membership in SASS; shall maintain attendance, active membership, and dues payment records; shall determine the membership status of all Black students; shall consider itself accountable to both the Steering Committee and the general body regarding determinations of a student's membership status.

## VII. Meetings.

- A. The Steering Committee shall be responsible for calling general meetings. Additional meetings may be called by petition of no fewer than five active members.
- B. A quorum of the general body shall consist of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the active membership, with a simple majority of those present required to pass a measure. Correspondingly, measures requiring a two-thirds vote must receive two thirds of those present. A quorum of the Steering Committee shall be  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the members.

## VIII. Representation of Policies.

- A. All decisions on policy, procedures, and programs made by the standing committees are subject to review by either the Steering Committee or the general body (active membership).

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- B. The active membership of SASS shall not represent its views or opinions to the public as being an expression by the entire Black student population unless the entire population has been polled.

IX. Ammendments.

- A. Any part of this constitution may be ammended at any time by no less than %50 of all active members. Proposed ammendments must be submitted to the entire membership in writing at least one week prior to a vote.