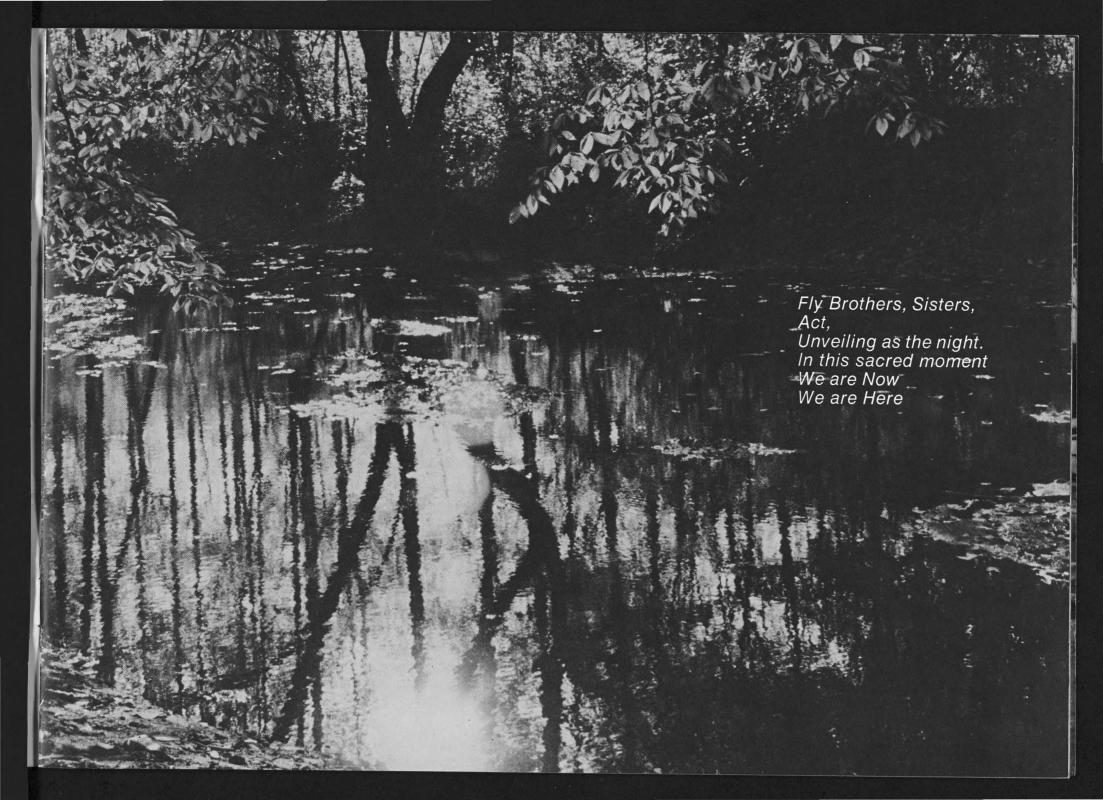
BLACK ATSWARTHMORE



Conceived by the Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society Originally written by Don Mizell '71 Sponsored by Swarthmore College Swarthmore, Pa. 19081 December, 1969

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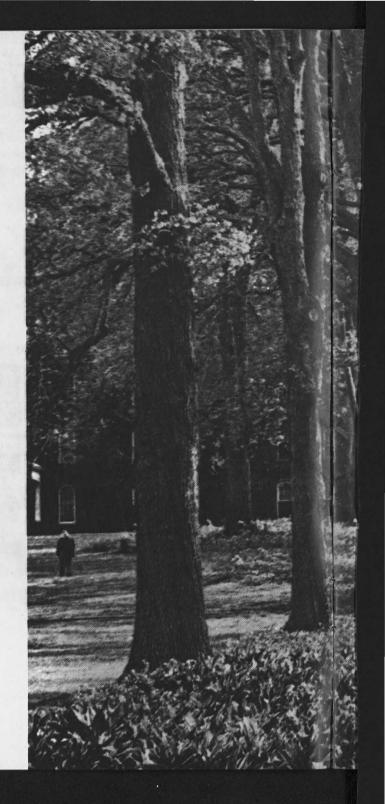
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Prelude



Today, more than ever before, Black students have the opportunity to attend the college of their choice. This booklet will assist you in determining which college might be most appropriate for you, as a Black student: It is an interpretation of what the Black experience often is at a white institution in general, and at Swarthmore College in particular.





Introduction

Swarthmore College enrolls slightly under 1200 students, and has achieved, over the past few years, a Black student enrollment of about ten per cent. It is coeducational and is situated in the small Borough of Swarthmore, Pa., only eleven miles southwest of Philadelphia. Semienclosed by a rambling wood known as The Crum (with winding creek, even) and attended by picturesque autumnal and spring seasons, the College's environs are quite different from (perhaps alien to) that which most Black students in America are accustomed to. It is not an urban institution, although Philadelphia is a half-hour train ride, New York is two hours north by car, and D.C. less than two hours south by train. It is not within walking distance of any other college, although there are several colleges in the area, among them Haverford, Bryn Mawr, University of Pennsylvania, Lincoln, and Cheyney State. Now, if you've never heard of Swarthmore that's because it's a small, eastern, intellectual, selective liberal arts college which, historically, had little contact with the Black community. And it has been called the best.

Given the tendency of colleges and universities to grow larger and larger and the consequent depersonalization of undergraduate education, Swarthmore offers the bright, motivated student a stimulating intellectual experi-



ence. It is small and exclusively undergraduate which means:

- 1) there is no graduate school to drain resources away from the undergraduate program;
- 2) during the academic year the faculty (two-thirds of them hold earned doctorates) is primarily concerned with teaching *you* rather than doing research, and
- 3) there are almost 150 faculty members for 1200 students. You figure out the advantage of that 8:1 student/faculty ratio in the learning situation.

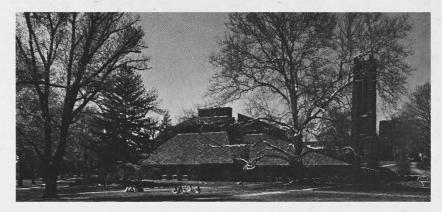
Dedicated to the development of sound intellectual skills, Swarthmore is a conscious move away from superspecialization: The information explosion requires not merely the ability to acquire information, but the talent to manage it. You may want to specialize later in a graduate or professional school and be among the seventy-five per cent of Swarthmore graduates who continue their education.

Before we can rap seriously about what it's like to be Black at Swarthmore, you need to know something about the physical facilities and resources of the College:

- the endowment of the College is about \$70 million which helps to pay almost half of the cost of your education;
- there are 325 acres of rolling green, ivy-covered walls, and the rambling Crum Creek, leaving lots of room for movement in your head and body;
- the five-year-old library, one of the best college libraries in the country, holds 400,000 books and open stacks give you immediate access to them;
- Sproul Observatory, with a 24-inch visual refracting

- telescope, is the center of fundamental research in multiple star systems;
- the Computer Center is furnished with an IBM 1130, but you also have remote access to IBM 360 facilities in Philadelphia;
- a brand new music building has, would you believe, enough practice rooms;
- when you need to tune in on your body, there's a Tartan-surfaced field house, squash courts, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and plenty of playing fields.

Obviously, Swarthmore is doing all right for itself physically and financially, but it costs a lot to run this place and that's reflected in the student budget of over \$4,700 per year. That sounds like a lot — that *is* a lot — but don't let the cost of a prestige college prevent you from applying. All first-rate private colleges cost more, but there is more financial aid available to you. If you are admitted, you will receive the money you need to attend. Swarthmore students get a million dollars a year in financial assistance. Solid.





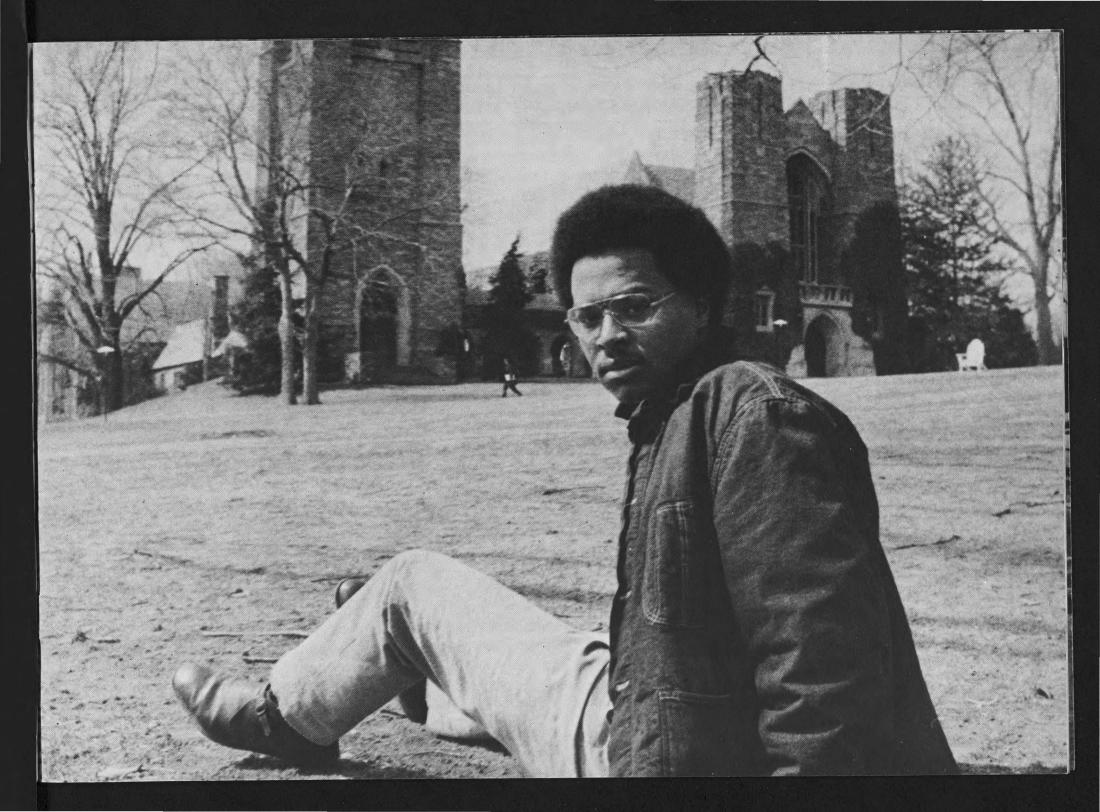






A more relevant dimension in admissions

Because most of the Brothers and Sisters born in America are faced with almost insurmountable obstacles in every sphere of life, and because many of the institutions functioning in this society are actually crippling bright and creative young Black minds, Swarthmore has come to recognize that it has an educational and social responsibility to seek out and encourage unconventionally qualified students, those whose qualifications may be different from the kind of student who generally applies, but who nevertheless display potential to cope with the rigorous academics if given the opportunity to attend and adjust to a qualitatively different, demanding situation. In an effort to ensure that those students who need a period of adjustment and assistance to adapt to this situation are given a chance, the College provides orientation, preenrollment, tutorial, and other support programs as needed. Some students get uptight about the "stigma" of needing initial help, and some are actually ashamed. Fortunately, they soon realize that they have nothing to be ashamed of; indeed, it is America's shame that their schools failed them. The fact of the matter is, they can and do do the work.



Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society



The very presence of Black students is transforming America's leading colleges, and Swarthmore is certainly no exception. Many Black students have come to the conclusion that their efforts in College ought to reflect a consciousness beyond campus boundaries. At Swarthmore, this realization is manifest as SASS—the Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society. The aim is simple and powerful: to encourage and extend an exchange of ideas among Black students in order to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the society in which we exist.

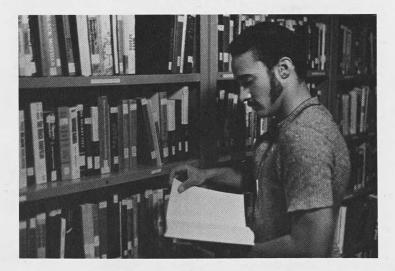
Many of us came to Swarthmore resolved (consciously or unconsciously) to be assimilated into this white

culture, ready to relinquish the "stigma" of being Black, i.e., "acting like a nigger." Ironically, we found that it was our intimate exposure to, and understanding of, this culture and society that made us appreciate our own. Many acknowledge now that whereas an education was once seen as a means of escape from the community, it is now seen as a means of liberating it. There are, however, varying degrees of commitment to this principle, and the Black community at Swarthmore respects them. But coming to Swarthmore will not allow you to ignore the fact that you are Black; nor will coming here (as some argue) automatically make you "white." Many of us place our Blackness above our individuality, while many of us do not consider race or culture overly significant. But no matter where we are situated on the continuum of racial consciousness, communication is our constant watchword because through it we are better able to confront most of the issues of life we will face continuously with white students and faculty.

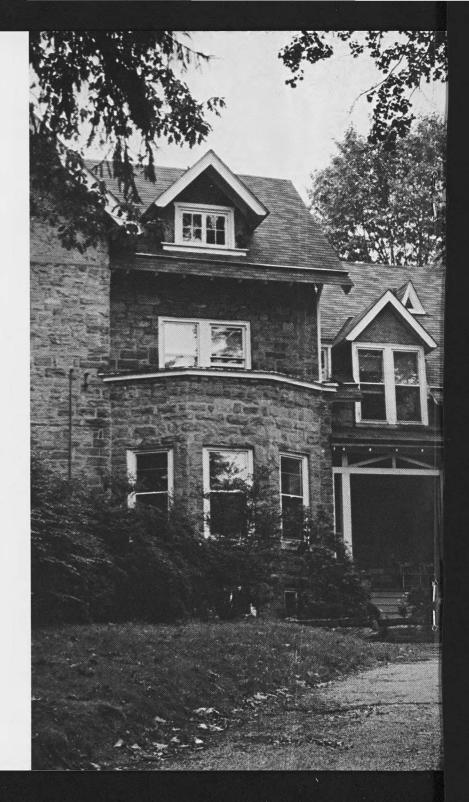
Many find SASS a source of strength and inspiration, a home away from home, where Brothers and Sisters attempt to relate and interpret their experience in a white milieu (i.e., America). Some find activity in SASS a lower priority in their life-style. Still, the reality of cultural differences does not disappear in college, although how you regard them often does. The white campus is no haven from racial misunderstanding and no one should expect it to be so. While Swarthmore is no complete refuge, it is oftentimes a cozy, secure environment compared to the world beyond its narrow borders. But many of us realize more and more that our dreams, our goals, and even our presence are especially important for dealing with the realities just outside Swarthmore.



Black Cultural Center



The Black Cultural Center provides the Black community here with opportunities different from, but in addition to, the more general social and cultural life of the College. It is a means of enriching the campus' cultural/social experience. It is not a move to separate Black students or their interests entirely from the life of the College. Rather, it is a base for definition and reinforcement of Black identity, an anchor in a white sea, a psychological and geographical point of reference. Moreover, because it is utilized periodically as a center for programs geared to the entire College community—art exhibits, performances, etc.—the center provides a situation conducive to meaningful cultural interaction. But obviously its main function is a place where you can be.









Rhythms & blues

Swarthmore is fronting and trying to run down your program to somebody, synthesizing your rap ability and your intellectual qualities—and getting ranked all over the place. It is hoopin'in the afternoon in the gym. Or playing cards. Or digging 'Trane on a Saturday afternoon between sporadic and loose-ended dialogue about the value-bias in the social sciences, with your tight man. It is checking out Philly and finding that it is not all that hip for a city of its size—but nothing a little creativity can't deal with. It is getting a C- or D+ on that very first paper and undergoing Instant Trauma (whatever happened to those A's and B's I was getting in high school?) but coming back strong next time around.

Swarthmore, tho', is not all buildings and books and classes and financial aid. It is far more than that. It is a time in your life. You live and you learn and you wonder and it is exciting and depressing and it is college.

It is people, it is Brothers and Sisters jiving, booking and/or styling. It is rapping till sun-up about just anything and maybe getting your game blowed away like it never was back at home, where you were the main man or the bossest sister.









Swarthmore is getting turned on to a new dimension of experience—and maybe turning it off. It is an attempt to forget. Or re-think. It is an all-Black thing. Or a cross-cultural thing. Or a just do what you want to when you want to and forget about people thing. Swarthmore is getting tired and depressed and questioning the meaning of it all, and wanting to hang it up but knowing all the while how un-hip that would be. It is bursting into class, ready to relate some freaked out idea you just had in the bathroom. It is community organizing in the nearby Black communities.

Swarthmore is being confronted with new information, with new kinds of people whose convictions and life-style may be radically different from yours, and reacting. And being confused. And finally pulling yourself together.

Swarthmore is papers, seminars, and essay exams. It is field work. It is reading one helluva lot, synthesizing and criticizing the information. The competition is tough. Really tough. The student body comes from among the top 2% of the nation's high school students. You may stumble a little at first, not knowing what's expected of you—but 3 years later when you are writing A and B papers, you are hip that it was just a matter of time. Just a matter of time.

Swarthmore is 9 o'clock at night and 300 pages to go and the Brothers and Sisters are down at the House partying back and you want to get into that, but you know why you are here so you stay right there, steady bookin'. It is dealing with some white liberal who wants you to solve "the problem" for him or apologize for his existence. Or coping with somebody trying to run a Blacker-thanthou thing on you and forcing you to get your program together, whatever it is.







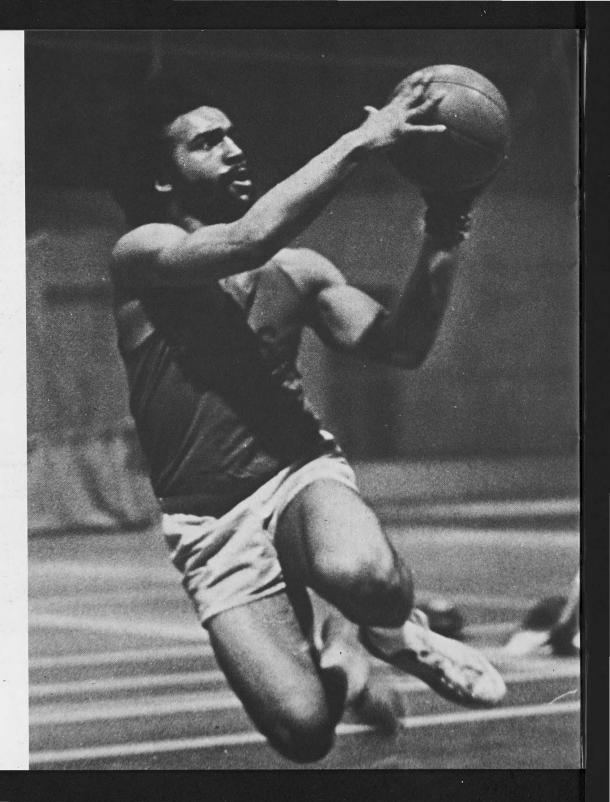
Swarthmore is spring or autumn (maybe even winter). It is a feeling inside. It is the fall rolling in and the greens, reds, oranges, browns, and yellows sprinkling the sky, sometimes dancing. It is strolling across the sloping front lawns barefoot, deep in thought about the dynamics of Black Aesthetics. Or just knocking out under a big oak. Swarthmore is spring, a stroll through the woods, perhaps with a loved one, closer to nature, to our roots and innermost thoughts: seeing beauty in the world and maybe moved by that beauty to a greater conviction that things have to change; that our people are suffering and things have to change.

Swarthmore is hard work and lots of it. It is 30-35 hrs. a week studying outside of class. Managing knowledge, juggling it and arriving at conclusions. No easy predigested textbooks—it is getting diverse materials and working with them. And this is together, this is definitely together.

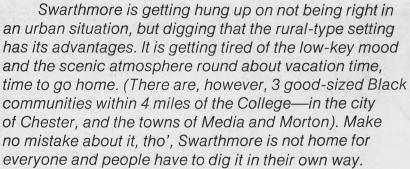






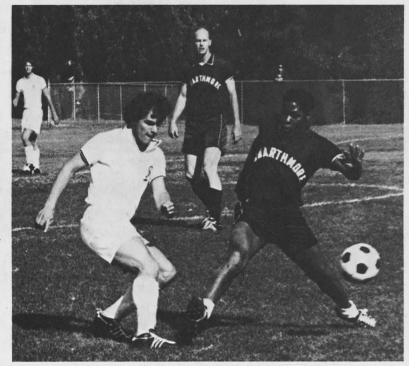






Swarthmore is weird weekends. It is being short on coin and trying to figure out what to get into: check out a flick, get mellow, throw a set, catch the 76'ers, Phillies, Eagles, Flyers, Pharaoh Saunders, go bowling, play cards, camp out, make a rock concert, go over to Bryn Mawr or Haverford, read, or finish that paper, make it on up to the City, cop a play, or just get with some Black folks. If you get bored you are probably lame anyway.





Epilogue

This exposition has not attempted to be objective or complete; you can obtain more concrete details by reading the regular College Catalogue. No, it is simply an effort to convey a few impressions of what Swarthmore is, and perhaps can be, to you. It is not a big university swarming with people, it does not house famous public figures to attract publicity (although an astronomer here first discovered a planet in another solar system), it is rarely in the national sports news, and it is not a familiar household word in all parts of the country. Aside from that, however, it is a college of the very highest quality and intent on remaining so. If you think Swarthmore offers something in some way that you could *really* get into, you should explore that possibility.

There's a Brother here who is interested in you. He is Fletcher J. Bryant, Jr., Assistant Dean of Admissions. So if you have questions about admissions, or want application forms, write to him at the Office of Admissions, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania 19081.

And keep on pushin'.

