

502 Woodland Terrace  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
January 9, 1969

To the Faculty and Administration of Swarthmore College:

Since everyone in the vicinity, from F&M to Lincoln students, has seen fit to express himself on Swarthmore's "racist admissions policy," I see no reason why a self-respecting black alumnus should not add his opinion. I consider myself relatively competent in the matter, as I have been closely associated with Swarthmore, both the student body and the college, through various friends and in various positions since my graduation in 1966. I was one of two black alumni who attended the first meeting of the Admissions Committee with the black students, when SASS walked out. I have waited to speak because I wanted to see just how far this matter would be taken. Now is no longer the time for silence.

First of all, I have enclosed a letter sent by SASS to a small, select group of "Negro" students who do not affiliate themselves with SASS. It is well worth reading, for it proves that SASS's position is not so monolithic or all-encompassing as might be believed. More important, it exemplifies the pressures exerted on the black student to conform to SASS's ideas for the sake of black unity. Under

such circumstances, is a decent education -- which must basically be an individual affair -- possible for the black student? SASS must be recognized for what it is -- a group of dissatisfied, insecure, and egoistic black students attempting exactly what their letter says they are not, a power play for notoriety.

I would assert that this whole matter of black admissions policy could have been solved peacefully, reasonably, and much faster had SASS not made its grandstand play. The suggestions made in the original meeting by those blacks who stayed and in the Hargadon report are basically no different than the SASS report except for tone and the lack of demand that Dean Hargadon be relieved of his duties. Action was advancing then, and in a much less emotion-charged atmosphere. Considering this, the only conceivable reason SASS could have had for their subsequent moves was to blow the matter up so that they could take credit in a public fashion for the progress made in black admissions policy.

With regard to the substance and ideology of admissions policy, I think that SASS's self-centered ambitions become even more evident in their proposals for admitting relatively large numbers of "risk" students merely because they are black. The admission of academically unqualified students

would demonstrate a singular lack of regard for the welfare of the incoming "risk" student. If SASS were less myopic, they would see it would be better for the welfare of the black man were he able to secure an education at an institution commensurate with his abilities. That is the critical matter, not that a certain number of high risk students be admitted to a particular institution (e.g., Swarthmore).

It is difficult enough for most qualified students to get through Swarthmore. Imagine the problems for a risk student, particularly a black student. The chances that he will succeed academically are slight, and there is no other real measure of success at Swarthmore. This student becomes dissatisfied, immediately a prey for SASS, which feeds on the dissatisfaction of those who are having either academic or social problems and blows them up into matters of "racism" and "discrimination." This is not to say that racism and discrimination never occur, but that SASS bandies about these terms so much as to make them meaningless. In the end, Swarthmore will have a black ghetto; an incipient one exists now. Is this educational, for black or white?

There is also the question of Swarthmore's standards. SASS simultaneously says that the standards should be disregarded for black student, yet that Swarthmore's high standards make it a potential training ground for black leaders and scholars. Granted that the college could lower its educational standards for blacks; yet I would ask why. There are black nonrisk students capable of making the grade here. The untapped areas where they live have already been suggested to the Admissions Committee. There are thousands of colleges and universities, both black and integrated, which are open to those who do not measure up to Swarthmore's standards. Swarthmore's main attraction is its high intellectual and academic standard; lower this and it has little to differentiate it from a number of small, coeducational colleges.

Ideologically, SASS openly says it is separatist. Nor does it hide its condemnation of those who believe in the "liberal" integrationist ethic as the viable solution to America's race problem. No one definitively knows what the welfare of the black man is, much less how to achieve it. And this is the advantage of a liberal society -- it is open to many different approaches, and able to choose one or a number of them. The radicals, black or white, feel that only their approach is the correct and virtuous one.

You, the faculty and administration, are white and thus in a tenuous position. It would be most tempting to say that SASS knows what is right for the black man because they are black and vocal. Yet the separatism advocated by SASS is not viable. The black man cannot exist in the long or short run in separate islands surrounded by a white sea. Integration will take longer, but is ultimately probably the only viable solution to America's racial problems.



With regard to acquiescence to SASS's demands, it is a commonplace that success increases one's confidence. Thus, your acquiescence may give them success and you will have done your part to further black pride and progress. It should also be axiomatic that success in pursuit of the wrong goals, or success gained using questionable methods, encourages the continued adherence to these beliefs and methods.

In this specific matter, SASS's immediate goal of increasing black enrollment is fine and unquestionable. The tone of its suggestions, and its ultimate goal -- separatism and the feeding of SASS -- are neither as fine nor as unquestionable. It strikes me that, since the Hargadon and SASS reports are so close in substantive procedures on black admissions policy (as even Mr. Etheridge has pointed out), yet so far apart in ultimate goals, tone, and knowledge on black admissions, the Hargadon report is the logical one to accept and implement.

If you let it be known that your intent is to implement the Hargadon report, and that SASS's pressures have meant nothing in this implementation, you will have done two things. You will have shown that, as faculty and administration, you had the wisdom to act. Secondly, you will have shown SASS that their bludgeon tactics have no place in an intellectual society where ideas must be open to unpressured, reasoned debate to make wise progress.

Yours truly,

*John H. Morrow, Jr.*

John H. Morrow, Jr. '66

SASS

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Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society

Swarthmore College

Swarthmore, Pennsylvania 19081

January 8, 1968

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

SASS is very desirous of showing a close black unity in this operation. To insure the greatest possible effectiveness in this action, there are a few important points upon which we must ask your cooperation: first, that there be no individual conversation with the press - all press should be referred to the SASS chairman, Clinton Etheridge. It would also be unwise to engage in speculation with other students, faculty, or administration concerning SASS's possible future plans of action, since this would probably lead to greater confusion in the college community at large.

In carrying through this action, SASS is trying to make a gain for black people, not a power play for notoriety. You may not agree with our radical methods, but you must admit the progress we as a black students' group have made, e.g., recent faculty meeting. This progress has been made as a unified group and any further progress must also be accomplished through black unity. SASS is not asking for your participation in this action, only that you not harm the operation inadvertently.

Sincerely,

Swarthmore Afro-American  
Students Society

THIS IS THE LETTER WHICH WAS ENCLOSED TO THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION  
FROM JOHN H. MORROW, JR.