

TO THE PARENTS OF ALL BLACK STUDENTS:

We, your sons and daughters, wrote this letter in the hope that this will clarify the reasons behind our recent actions and correct any distortions that may have occurred by usual forms of communication--the grapevine and the media.

At the time of the last letter that we sent to you we were engaged in a struggle that had reached the level of confrontation with the administration of Swarthmore College. We came to you as your sons and daughters, asking for your support. We also came as young adults, cognizant of the deep commitment and attendant responsibilities we must accept, if we are to achieve self-definition and self-determination for our people and ourselves.

We know that there may be many questions, doubts, and reservations concerning our actions and we realize that the letter that we sent to you did not clear up all these things. Therefore, we have written another to better explain our actions and to explain the causes that precipitated them.

Last year SASS occupied the admissions office in protest of Swarthmore's admissions policy in respect to black people. SASS demanded more black students, black instructors, black administrators, and black counselors. Our actions were prompted by our need to maintain a sense of identity and stability in a predominantly white college. Out of discussions with the faculty and administration 3 major issues were gleaned that could make life at Swarthmore more viable for the black community. They were: 1) revision of the Black Admissions Policy, 2) the instituting of a Black Cultural House, and 3) the implementation of a Black Studies Program.

A commission studying black admissions was formed and during the summer of 1969, the Ad Hoc Black Admissions Committee (AHBAC) report was written. This comprehensive report stated the criteria for black admissions and was presented to the regular Admissions Committee. An organized Black Studies Program would emphasize the experience of black people, past, present and future. A Black Studies Committee was to plan the program, including the securing of a Director and professors to teach in the program. A Black Cultural Center was suggested for the Black community at Swarthmore as a center for social and cultural activities; this would serve as a place for discussions, parties, art projects, festivals, conferences, etc. In May of 1969, the College agreed with SASS's need for a cultural house and promised to provide adequate facilities.

Ten months later, after frequent discussions with the college, little had been accomplished. The AHBAC report was still being "evaluated and implemented" by an admissions committee that was 90% white; the Black Studies program had only been advanced by the appointment to a director, the power of this director is minimal, the securing of professors has yet to begin, curriculum emphases are still unclear; finally the college had not yet presented adequate facilities for a Black Cultural Center.

When we made known our dissatisfaction to the college in the person of President Cross, we received no formal reply and instead heard through the grapevine that he thought we were a

small minority of the main body of black students, further that we were "behaving very badly". To show our unity and our determination we did two things: we wore black armbands and we ate together at one long table in the dining hall.

On March 9, 1970, 50 SASS members marched silently to the home of President Cross carrying lighted torches. President Cross greeted the students on his porch and tried to initiate a discussion. We, to the background rhythm of African Drums, chanted UHURU-FREEDOM and as a climax read a poem of disillusionment and disgust. Ten minutes after our arrival we departed.

On March 10, 1970, we co-sponsored with the Student Council a dialogue for truth and understanding. At this dialogue many members of the college community were made aware of the steps leading to our present confrontation with the administration. At this time we made public the deadline that we had announced to the college, that of March 11, 1970 for it to come up with meaningful solutions in the fields of black admissions, black studies, and the securing of a black cultural center.

President Cross provided no acceptable proposed response to our deadline. As a result, we initiated a boycott of classes and exams. This was to demonstrate that we were no longer going to participate in college activities of any sort if our needs were not met. The deadline was extended to March 12, 1970 at 3:00 p.m. to allow the President all opportunities to respond satisfactorily. He did not present a concrete solution. At 9:30 Friday, March 13, we staged a 24-hr. vigil in President Cross' office, until an acceptable solution could be found. SASS and President Cross were finally able to agree upon the setting up of a Steering Committee for the Black Cultural Center. This committee consists of the black counselor, the black admissions officer, the black studies director, two other members of the black community of Swarthmore, and there will be five black students also. The Steering Committee will be finally responsible for developing and implementing matters of program, activities, and access to the center and is also responsible for submitting a capital budget and an operating budget to the college. The black Cultural Center will hopefully be ready for operation in September, following some necessary renovations.

Finally we want to give you our love as black people, as your sons and daughters, and our respect to you as you are our elders. For this reason we have informed you of our actions and feelings.

Umoja na Ujamaa  
In Unity and Familyhood.