

### WHY WE CAN'T WAIT

The first Black student probably came to Swarthmore around 1942. It's hard to track down this precedent-setting history-making event in the Swarthmore area because very little written evidence exists, and this history must be shrouded, therefore, by hearsay, recollection and uncertainty. Before that date, there were a number of frustrated efforts to desegregate the college and break the color line that had existed by gentlemen's agreement. True illustrations may shed light on this point.

In his Memoirs, Charles J. Darlington, 1915, relates the story that his Swarthmore Dean of Men, William A. Alexander, told him of Black admissions at Swarthmore, 1905 style. The college had unknowingly accepted a very light-skinned Negro male because the admissions information was gathered from filled-out questionnaires and from photographs", without the now required interview. As Charles Darlington recounts it:

When he arrived it was found that he was a Negro boy. His picture was shaded in such a way that this fact had not been obvious. The college was in an embarrassing quandary. No Negroes had ever been admitted. As "Alec" said, "It just wasn't done." After much heart searching by the college administration and probably some members of the Board, the boy and his parents were told that an error had been made. The college was very sorry but he could not be permitted to enter.

Everett Lee Hunt in the Revolt of the College Intellectual gives us a glimpse into Depression-style Swarthmore Black admissions. Everett Hunt narrates:

In 1932 a Negro from a Philadelphia High School decided to apply to Swarthmore. He was a prominent athlete; had a good background in classics, his major interest; was president of the student government and popular with his fellows; and, except for his color, was a logical candidate for open scholarship. The admission of colored students had never been approved by the Board of Managers, and so the Admissions Committee referred the application to the Board. After a long discussion it decided by a large majority that Negro students could not yet be admitted to a coeducational college like Swarthmore. Their admission would raise too many problems and create too many difficulties. There was general satisfaction at the happy solution presented by Dean Speight, just arrived from Dartmouth, when he got the boy accepted there with a large scholarship. A men's college seemed just the place for him.

No doubt, it's embarrassing for a Quaker school like Swarthmore to have racial skeletons in the closet. The Quakers, one of the first group to come out against slavery, have long had a social activist creed which runs directly counter to the racial skeletons in the closet of Quaker Swarthmore College. The Faith and Practice of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting voices the social concern that Friends have traditionally had in racial justice.



The plight of native races and disadvantaged groups in Africa, India, Asia, Europe and America which so heavily weighted upon the minds and hearts of members of the Commission on Racial Justice, places both a responsibility and opportunity before the Society of Friends. Misunderstandings and bitterness which divide economic groups and national governments rests in no small measure upon race prejudice. If the causes of industrial and international wars are to be removed, effective work must be done in improving the status of disadvantaged groups.

What SASS endeavors by presenting its demands is to close the gap at Swarthmore between faith and practice and thus help the college reach its full potential as an educational institution in the professed service of a better American society. This will come about by providing talented Black youths with the academic competence to function on two levels. Because of its intense and rigorous educational experience, Swarthmore College could be a training ground for Black scholars and Black leaders. Black Swarthmore alumni could one day be working at the frontiers of knowledge in Black studies, doing the new scholarship and unearthing a vital body of knowledge. Swarthmore could give its Black alumni the intellectual discipline and analytic powers to look at the hard, complex issues that Black leadership will encounter in future years. This is the aim of the SASS demands.

In order to be Black scholars and Black leaders, however, Swarthmore Black college students will have to possess viable Black identities, a sense of group pride and destiny which can only come about through individual self-analysis and self-definition. In a predominately white College like Swarthmore, the Black students group plays a very important counter - socialization role in nurturing the viable selfhood for productive. From this goals flows the rationale for Black students at Swarthmore and the legitimacy of SASS.

This is a necessary conclusion that thinking Black students are coming to. Thus SASS enjoys the passive if not the active support of virtually all the Black students on campus. To illustrate this point, after student council endorsed the original SASS demands and certain white administrators were suggesting that SASS was an illegitimate, unrepresentative organization, the group conducted an internal poll and found that all but six of the Black students on the campus were willing to go on record as SASS members. White Swarthmore was shown that some of their best friends are not Negroes.

On a campus that professes to be liberal and enlightened, why does SASS encounter so much resistance and misunderstanding in its goals of self-definition and self-determination for Black people. A great deal of the answer lies in fact that the College suffers from white liberal mind set on race relations. By that we mean that Swarthmore College as an institution has a "Love me, I'm a liberal" approach to race relations that Phil Ochs in Concert satirizes. In other words, because the College was founded under Quaker aegis, and because its administrators raise money for Wade House, and because its faculty helps run Upward Bound,



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and because its students tutor Chester Kids, lily white Swarthmore automatically assumes its the racial scene and doing the best it can. White liberal Swarthmore has been content to push for racial justice and Black self-determination in Chester, or Philadelphia, or Media, rather than in its own backyard. Black Power is good in Chester, but bad in the campus. The racism of the outer white society stops at the edge of college property, because Swarthmore College, a small Co-educational LIBERAL liberal arts 11 miles southwest of Philadelphia, because the campus community is one big happy racial family.

How long can basically descent people lull themselves into the fragile and status quo complacency of rosy-eyed saccharine existence, where everybody is supposed to be color blind and and unprejudiced? This fantasy world can never exist in a society that was nurtured on racism and in which it still runs rampant. Very few, if any, white people in contemporary America have or can elude the racist virus because it is ubiquitous and deep-seated. But there is one hope, there is a way to work ourselves out of this sad dilemma -to face the hard, cold, cruel reality of the racial crisis.-

Because the vague and accusatory word racist . . . connotes an overt, virulent bigot clubbing poor defenseless Negroes, white liberals concerned with social justice don't like to see the term bandied about. Doubtless, this is a typical Swarthmore reaction. Because some of our best friends are white liberals, many SASS members are careful with their racial labels. Yet to many "Love me" liberals, the term white liberal itself must seem at times an epithet. Whatever the label, all are members of the Master Race in a society in which the legitimated belief in the inferiority of Blacks is deeply ingrained, and pervasive. Every white is not to blame for a racist America, but every white is in some degree responsible.

Thus Swarthmore College, the liberal Quaker school has a responsible to combat racism and advance racial equality. We hope that President Smith and Swarthmore College will not turn their backs on the greater crisis of this century.

SASS proceeds with a clear conscience, can Swarthmore College?

The Swarthmore Afro-American Students' Society