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Minutes of the meeting of the Special Committee on Black Studies.  
Tuesday, May 28, 1968. Sharples Dining Hall. 12 noon - 1:50 pm.  
All members were present.

Discussion began with the question: should we decide on two or three limited areas of black studies for next year or should we spread out to a variety of fields? Choosing limited areas would enable the College to make better use of limited funds; we might become known for a specialized program and then build to larger areas. The general feeling, however, was not to make artificial limitations at this time, to try to begin with all areas so as not to get a limited view of black studies. There will be a natural process of selection anyway: some areas will be more successful; also, since teachers will be hard to find we should remain as open as possible at this point. There will be a wide variety of student interest, both black and white, and we should try to serve as wide a range as possible.

If we are willing to pay enough we can get well-qualified black teachers, but this raises the question of priorities: do we want many varied courses, or one very well-qualified black teacher? A few high-quality courses taught from the black perspective would be better than many courses. Is black perspective more important to some fields than others? Mr. Gilbert<sup>†</sup> and Mr. Shackford felt that it was more important to courses in black materials in their fields, political science and literature, than in history, where it seems less essential to reconstructing the past, and where courses in black materials might be taught equally well by white teachers. This turned out to be a mistaken impression. Mr. Wright said that history can be just as subjective and liable to perspectives and individual points of view. Marilyn Allman said that the importance of perspective in History courses, both black and other, should not be ignored. its effects can be seen in introductory history courses which concentrate on great historical personalities, and which might from another perspective include more about the masses and mass movements, and also more about European expansion and its effects on non-white countries. Mr. Van Til said that

there are really two value decisions involved here--what gets into a course, and what doesn't get into it. Also, the faculty in the black studies program should be varied, black and white, to include many perspectives. Mr. Legesse said that to teach African history from an African point of view was a good goal but very hard to achieve at the present time. Most African sources are written from the European point of view. Only with recent history, where living people remember the events, is it possible to get information from the people's point of view.

The process of making appointments and the kinds of appointments: The History department definitely favors teaching black materials, and keeps the same prerogatives in making this appointment as for any other history teacher. It would not be a full-time or permanent appointment. There might be an alternation of black and white professors over a period of years. Would black teachers then be definitely not considered for full-time appointments? No: part-time teachers are always being considered and looked over for possible full-time appointments. But doesn't a definite plan for alternation between black and white teachers exclude the possibility of permanent appointments? Many of these teachers may be moonlighting--holding permanent positions at other schools. The regular routine in hiring would be followed--through the department involved and the President's office. The function of this committee is to uncover good people and point them up to the departments. Also, we can communicate a sense of urgency to the departments and a sense of interdepartmental programs and interrelatedness. How would SASS's point of view be considered? SASS can make suggestions but would not have veto power. Some candidates might meet members from SASS.

Mr. Van Til asked: Why did only one student want to find out more about Mr. Hershberg last week? Marilyn Allman answered that perspective is very important to her, especially in history. It is in history that the most crucial misrepresentation of black people has been made, it is here that there is the greatest need for black



people to start doing research. Also, there are more black people available in this field than any other. Mr. Wright pointed out that Mr. Hershberg was just an example--he was being considered before this committee came into being--and the department is also considering names and credentials of black teachers. The names on the SASS list of alternatives were discussed. The committee would like to consider more names. It would be very helpful if suggestions were submitted to the History and to the English departments as to what materials ought to be covered so that departments will have questions to ask when interviewing candidates.

Specific proposals from departments: As a starter two courses are possible in Political Science:

1. A course in the Negro's place in American politics--this could be considered a subdivision of politics and political parties in which other courses are offered.
2. A course in the black ghetto in the Northern city--considered as a subdivision of urban development and local government.

Personel is perhaps more available for the second course. The course might be offered with one white teacher, a regular member of the department, and one black teacher, actively involved in black ghetto problems, a community organizer who could bring to the course perspective and experience in details and practicality. The two teachers would plan the course together. Two kinds of format are possible:

1. The analytical framework could be supplied at the beginning in a course in Community Government. For the second half of the semester the student could choose to continue in that course, or go to a special section on the black ghetto, or perhaps both.
2. A separate course. This seems better, and the closeness of Philadelphia makes it probable that teachers will be available.

There will be a new teacher in the department next year, fresh out of graduate school, who will teach community government; he is not so well prepared in black studies as in community government. Africa is a longer range problem: an exchange program might be worked out for teachers, or perhaps both teachers could be at the same college together. International black political thought would have to be a separate course. A lecture series with many black speakers would be too diffuse, one teacher is better.

In Sociology-Anthropology, black materials are already well represented in the course offering. One suggestion from the SASS list, Afro-American social institutions, looks like a good germ. There will be a new member of the department next year, who has done research in Nigeria, and who is interested in religion and social change.

In literature, courses in African or West Indian writers alone could probably not be considered a part of the English department (Modern Languages, perhaps?). However, a course in Comparative Black Literature probably could be, since the English department already offers three courses in comparative literature. A lecture series with many speakers and perspectives might be very successful with this kind of course.

Admissions: Can this committee make recommendations about admissions? In spite of what is said about the general appeal of black studies, these courses will probably be carried by black students. There is, however, a diminishing number of black students coming to Swarthmore (next year only eight). SASS is pressuring Fred Hargadon as much as it can. Can this committee help admissions search for students? Can we recommend a five-year program for black students who have shown they have potential for college work, but whose high school training puts them behind white students. A black studies program would make the College very attractive to black students. Black students are more self-conscious and concerned today--they ask: What black studies do you have in the curriculum? These suggestions were discussed. Some felt we will have plenty



to do with just the curriculum, that the Admissions Committee is already going to consider these possibilities. Others felt that good things bear repeating and that we should lobby. Mr. Van Til, Marilyn Allman, and Al Dietrich are asked to think about this over the summer and decide whether we should make a proposal in the fall about admissions and about recruiting in the South.

Will this committee write a report? Perhaps, but it would not be the sum total of our effort; we will be working with departments all the time. Mr. Wright felt that a report should be written only if absolutely necessary.

Summer assignments: The following people will find out what they can about the programs offered at schools in the area they will be in this summer: Mr. Wright: Yale. Mr. Legesse: Boston University (Harvard has allocated black studies entirely to Boston University). Clint Etheridge: Morehouse, Spellman, Clark, AU--school of social work. Marilyn Allman: Columbia. Al Dietrich: Princeton, N.Y. State University. Divisions by subject: collect materials and syllabi as available:

History: Marilyn Allman, Mr. Wright.

Political Science: Mr. Gilbert, Don Mizell.

Sociology: Mr. Van Til, Clint Etheridge.

Literature: Marilyn Holifield, Mr. Shackford.

Economics: Mr. Pierson (economics of inner city--market structure, exploitation).

Please send summer addresses to Mr. Pierson. The committee will meet again in the fall.

Appended to the minutes: SASS report "Summary of Discussion about alternatives for a program of Black Studies at Swarthmore"--3 pages, dittoed.

Additions and corrections to the minutes of the meeting on May 21, 1968.

Page 3, three lines from the bottom. After "the courses would just apply economic principles to special materials" add the following sentence: "But don't non-rational entities, such as prejudice and racism, distort or invalidate the classical economic model?"

Page 4, six lines from the top. The sentences: "The problem of the relation of black perspective to academic disciplines can be seen in the anthropology and history of Africa. When written from a black perspective, one learns a lot about the author but very little about the country he is supposedly describing." should read:

"The problem of the relation of perspective to academic disciplines can be seen in the anthropology and history of Africa. When written from a white perspective, one learns a lot about the author and the European point of view (and especially about Europeans in Africa) but very little about the country that is supposedly being described."