

The constant challenge before Penn State or any great institution of higher learning is to widen our avenues to knowledge. It is of vital importance that a university, through its policies and actions, demonstrate to its students, faculty, alumni and the larger community, its commitment to provide an open meeting place—a forum where observations, experiences, theories and philosophies may be examined and discussed in a democratic climate of intellectual freedom.

Toward the active fulfillment of this role, it is noteworthy that *The Penn Stater* has undertaken the development and presentation of a three-part series of articles providing personal insights and perspectives on the experiences and relationship of black students and alumni with the University. Some of Penn State's most distinguished alumni have shared with *Penn Stater* writers the broad range of their experiences with and feelings toward the University.

I recognize that some read-

THE BLACK Experience

At Penn State

ers may be troubled by certain portions of these accounts. Indeed, within the articles one may find descriptions of racial injustice, indifference or affronts to human dignity. To some, such incidents may seem foreign when viewed in comparison with their own college years. However, it is important to understand that just as every member within a family views that unit from a unique perspective, so have minority alumni and students found points of distinction when comparing their experiences to others. Those differences are an important part of the reality and definition of Penn State within our

world. To the extent we desire improvement, we can and must use the experiences of the past to productive future advantage.

In order to further understanding, the writers have endeavored to silhouette these circumstances as related by the minority alumni and students against the backdrop of the dynamic currents and prevalent social attitudes of the times.

On the positive side of the ledger, amidst these recollections there are also accounts of generosity, rewarding educational experiences, friendships and alliances, extraordinary personal accomplishments in overcoming

formidable obstacles, and—quite importantly—expressions of caring and abiding commitment toward the betterment of the whole of the University community. In sum, it is a reflection of the world past and present—neither all black nor white, rough-edged nor smooth, but a mixture of hues and textures.

It is said that reflection is good for the soul. Such is true of universities as well as individuals. It is my hope that this series will engender a thoughtful discussion among alumni about the values which should guide us in helping Penn State to become a stronger and ever brighter beacon of educational opportunity illuminating our way to the future.

Barry K. Robinson '67

Alumni Executive Board Member;
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Editor's note: Racial tensions are evident on college and university campuses nationwide. Even such institutions as Oberlin College, one of the first in the nation to adopt a "color-blind" admissions policy and long known for its racial awareness, have recently experienced flare-ups and racial incidents. African-Americans and other minority populations are still subject to discrimination.

Penn State also has experienced problems. Last April, a series of protests by African-American students at University Park focused national attention on the campus. On April 8, seventy-nine black and eleven white protestors, most of them students, were arrested after refusing to leave

the University's Telecommunications Building, where about 150 had staged a sit-in and hundreds more had gathered outside. Subsequent meetings between top University officials and African-American representatives focused on such issues as:

The creation of a position for a vice-president for minority affairs; an effective effort to increase black faculty, staff and students; a requirement that every student take a course with a non-male, non-white orientation; the upgrade of the black studies program to a full department; an increase in financial support to black students; expansion and improvement of black cultural programs and resources, such as the Paul

Robeson Cultural Center; and added efforts within the colleges to recruit and retain minority students and adequately handle affirmative action cases.

Productive meetings and increased awareness on campus and in the State College community have followed the sit-in. The University dropped charges against the students arrested and has begun more aggressive efforts to address the racial climate at Penn State, including holding open meetings and discussions with not only Concerned African-Americans at Penn State and the Black Caucus, but with other groups and the umbrella Coalition for Human Equality.

In this series on blacks at Penn State, it is The Penn

Stater's intention, not to interpret events, but to inform alumni about the campus environment as it relates to the black experience. This first article places this collective experience in a historical context that we hope will allow readers to place the current situation in perspective and gain insight into the problems that the University, as a microcosm of the world, is working to overcome. We hope that by examining the experiences of a few members of one minority we can illuminate those of all who suffer the abuses of discrimination.

'JIM CROW MUST GO'

1900-1955, FROM THE FIRST BLACK STUDENT TO
THE FIRST BLACK STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

by Lisa Roney

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, putting an end to legally sanctioned slavery in the United States. By 1868 blacks had been granted United States citizenship, and yet thirty-two years would pass before the first known black student would enroll at what would then be the Pennsylvania State College.

It would be *fifty* years after that before blacks would enter the universities of Tennessee and Louisiana. And it would take 15,000 federal troops to regain and then preserve order when James Meredith, a black student, would begin classes at the University of Mississippi in 1962.

In 1900 the racial climate in this country was already volatile. Despite race riots in

places such as New York City, blacks were leaving the South for Northern cities in large numbers, to escape the violence that plagued them at home. Between the turn of the century and 1925 there were more than 3,000 recorded lynchings in the nation, mostly in the Southern states, an estimated 115 in 1900 alone.

In that year, the black population in the U.S. was nearly nine million, and although it had been thirty-five years since the end of the Civil War, there were only 2,500 college graduates among them. Blacks, like many others, felt that education was the key to obtaining their rights in society. That year Calvin H. Waller '05 came from Georgia to enroll at Penn State.

Little is known about Wall-

er's experience here, and in fact it cannot be sworn that he was the first black student at Penn State, as the University kept no official records of racial identity.

It is known that in 1902,

after Waller's mother had died, his depression and loneliness nearly prevented him from returning to State College. President George Atherton, in personal correspondence, prevailed upon

A native of Liberia and rumored to be the son of a chieftain, Ko Wile Gbu Donma '23 suffered hardships during his college years that caused him "to question Christian civilization," but he stayed in this country as a teacher at such black schools as Tuskegee Institute until his death in 1951.

Zany antics characterized Julian A. Cook Sr.'s freshman year, when he lived in Old Main. He went on to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania and was an architect in Washington, D.C., before his death in 1986.

Long hours of work and solitude confronted Joseph L. Johnson '19 when he was studying agronomy at Penn State. He was professor and head of physiology and dean of the College of Medicine at Howard University between 1931 and 1970, and long after retiring he maintained his keen interest in fighting discrimination and in keeping abreast of medical and social affairs. Among his many honors is the Penn State Distinguished Alumnus title awarded in 1977.

The first known black student at Penn State, Calvin H. Waller '05, went on to a long and successful career as head of the agriculture department at Prairie View A&M University and director of extension services for blacks in Texas, until his death in 1940.

The first black woman to graduate from Penn State, Mildred Settle Bunton '32 didn't have any problems she couldn't handle herself. After getting her degree in home economics, she received a master's degree from Cornell in 1953. She is retired as director of dietetics at Freedmens Hospital and associate professor at Howard University. She was named a Penn State Distinguished Alumna in 1973.



Waller to return and stressed the importance of his education:

I wish to urge you, in the strongest possible manner, not to think of giving up your course of education. A break in your course now would disastrously change your entire future career. You

must not let any present feeling of depression turn you aside from your duty to yourself and to those whom you are preparing to help.

When Booker T. Washington wrote to Atherton requesting information on "any young colored men taking work in the various courses to whom I could make an offer" of employment at Tuske-

gee Institute, Atherton had replied that, although Waller's early education had been deficient, he felt sure Waller would be a worthy candidate once he completed his course at Penn State. Indeed, Waller did graduate from Penn State in 1905 and went on to a distinguished career as head of the agricultural department at Prairie View A&M, Texas's black land-grant school, until his death in 1941.

"The absence of any social life for Negroes and the isolation of the location was more than the other [black] student could take," Johnson recalled in 1977, "so he dropped out after the first semester, and until I graduated I was the only Negro on campus."

Johnson went on to get his Ph.D. and M.D. degrees from the University of Chicago in 1931 and to become professor of physiology and dean of the Medical School at Howard University, where he retired in 1970. He worked for the elimination of discrimination in restaurants, hotels and theaters, and was an original owner of the highly successful DuPont Theater, the first movie house in the nation's capital to operate with a policy of nondiscrimination.

But in 1914 Johnson struggled, not only with loneliness and isolation but with severe

The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the National Urban League were formed in 1910, but little had changed by 1914, when Joseph L. Johnson '19 arrived at State College from Philadelphia, as one of two black students in his class. (There were none in the upper classes.)

An active participant in Omega Psi Phi fraternity and in college sports, Benson Dutton '33 made the most of his years at Penn State. Retired director of construction for the former U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and a 1971 Penn State Distinguished Alumnus, he has given many years of service to the fields of teaching and civil engineering.

One of the country's foremost muralists, John T. Biggers '48, '48g, 54g, founded and headed for thirty-four years Texas Southern University's art department. A 1972 Penn State Distinguished Alumnus, he has devoted himself full-time to his painting since 1983.

Higher education and civil rights are long-term concerns for the Honorable Henry R. Smith '39, who received his LL.B. degree from Duquesne University in 1949. He has been a judge of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas since 1970.

With a bachelor's degree from Arkansas AM&N College, Bridges A. Turner '39g, '41g, came to Penn State to further pursue his education. Long dedicated to helping young people, Dr. Turner spent twenty-one years as dean of the School of Technology at Texas Southern University and many more as director of the Minority Manpower Resources Project, which still benefits from his time and talents.

Writing for *Collegian* and other campus publications started Herb Nipson '40 on his way to becoming *Ebony* magazine's executive editor. Along the way he earned an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa. He was named a Penn State Distinguished Alumnus in 1973. In 1987 he retired and now devotes his energies to Chicago's South Side Community Art Center.

Ten years after enrolling, William H. Moses Jr. graduated in 1933. He became professor of architecture at Hampton Institute in Virginia, where he taught for many years before retiring.



economic hardship. He received a state scholarship to cover his tuition, but worked "every free minute" for the fifteen cents an hour that supported him. One of his regular jobs was doing the laundry of a professor's family every Monday *before* his eight o'clock class. He remembers one winter morning, with the temperature at twenty degrees below zero, the wet laundry frozen in the basket, and tears of exhaustion streaming down his face, wondering if the price was too high for this education he was getting.

Johnson chose to stay and, after a stint with the Army at the first Negro Officer's Training Camp, where he became a second lieutenant, he graduated in 1919 with a B.S. in agronomy.

Between 1910 and 1920, blacks left the rural South for the North at the rate of fifty thousand a year. Throughout the 1920s, increased competition for jobs in an unstable economic atmosphere led to racial tensions in urban areas. In 1919 alone, there were twenty major race riots in the country, including one that raged through Chicago for two weeks, leaving 38 people dead, 526 injured and 1,000 homeless.

In State College, all of that must have seemed far away. By the early twenties, there was not only a handful of black students on campus, but a sprinkling of international students from China and other countries as well. For the most part, these students fit in as well as they could and managed to survive economic hardship and discrimination to excel in their studies.

The story is told of Ko Wle Gbu "KoKo" Donma '23, a Liberian student who fell gravely ill. After being summoned by Donma's fellow students, the doctor diagnosed his ailment as severe malnutrition. For months, Donma had been attempting to prepare meals in his room in Old Main, as no eating establishment in town would serve him.

Judge Julian Abele Cook '52, on the other hand, reports that his father (also Julian Cook), who attended Penn State during the twenties and went on to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, never mentioned any racial problems when he spoke of his year on campus. Cook speculates that because there were so few blacks enrolled, they had to lead an integrated life and were accepted, though in restricted roles.

"He had a very positive experience at Penn State," Cook says. "He told me stories about when he and Bill Moses ['33] lived together in Old Main, zany stories about what freshmen would do, like dropping bags of water from the window onto somebody's head, things like that. He used to say that college would be the happiest time of my life."

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit hard the already economically disadvantaged black population, but their numbers continued to grow, albeit slowly, at Penn State. In 1929 Mildred Settle Bunton '32, a native of Philadelphia, transferred to Penn State from the University of New Orleans, where she had been able to attend college by living with and babysitting for a family she had met at home.

She was the first black woman to attend Penn State, and when she arrived, she recalls the University bursar commenting, "Huh, I haven't seen anything like *you* around here. I guess you're an experiment." One of nine children from a severely deprived family, who had worked for four years between high school and college, Bunton was not about to be discouraged. "I told him that if he wanted to call it an experiment, it was fine with me, but I didn't intend to leave," she recalls. "I was a Pennsylvanian. I was tenth in my high school class. And I didn't plan to go any place else."

Mildred Bunton graduated with honors and went on for a master's at Cornell Univer-

sity, a long career at Howard University and many years of service to the field of dietetics. Her years at Penn State and beyond have been characterized by the same determination that she showed in her encounter with that administrator whose name she can't recall. Although she remembers local children calling her "the woman on the box" (after Aunt Jemima), she explains it by saying, "They had never seen a colored woman before. No one ever *mistreated* me when I was there."

In fact, the memories of both Bunton and Benson Dutton '33, who graduated with a degree in civil engineering, are exceedingly positive and overflow with praise for the teachers and families who helped them make it through the years of work and study.

"Professor Julius Kaulfuss was not only my academic advisor," recalls Dutton, "he was like a father to me. And the [Eugene] Bischoffs [with whom he lived] brought joy to my life. I still correspond with Mrs. Bischoff."

"Every fall when I arrived I would have an entire wardrobe on my bed," Bunton remembers, "because the [Joseph] Ritenours [with whom she lived] had a daughter about my size. Mrs. Ritenour would get me some shoes, too, from somewhere else, because Ann's feet were bigger than mine."

Still, the life was not easy. Both Bunton and Dutton earned room and board by performing domestic tasks for the families with whom they lived. The only spending money either had was from tips they might receive from houseguests. "I scrubbed the floors practically every day," Bunton recalls, "and I would have to get back to the house from my eleven o'clock class and have my maid's uniform on to serve lunch at noon, and then make it back to a one o'clock class."

"We didn't have time to party," she adds when contemplating the social atmosphere. "Sometimes we would go over to Bellefonte to Harriet Mills' place and play cards and dance, but mostly we worked and studied."

"We knew that we were there to get an education," Dutton agrees. "I had to make it, for those who were sacrificing for me to be there, and for my own achievement. I wouldn't have been able to face my friends if I hadn't graduated."

Their dedication to achievement was reflected in their academic records. Bunton, who graduated with honors, had the highest grades in the home economics department and was consistently on the dean's list. The only black fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, of which Dutton was a member, had the highest grade-point average of any on campus, Dutton recalls.

During the Roosevelt administration of the 1930s, many federal social welfare programs were put into place which helped blacks in the areas of employment and education. In 1935 the first union that would admit large numbers of blacks in the form of unskilled laborers, the AFL-CIO, was formed. Hitler's refusal to shake the hands of black medalists, such as track star Jesse Owens, at the 1936 Olympics outraged the world and garnered sympathy for black causes. And in 1938 the Supreme Court ruled that the University of Missouri must admit Lloyd Gaines to its all-white law school.

During those years, Penn State saw minimal increases in its black student body. By the 1939-40 school year, enrollment had doubled from that of 1929-30 to well over 6,000 students, but still fewer than twenty of these were black. That number, perhaps combined with increased competition for scant material wealth during the Depression, was enough to raise racial tensions in State College.

In 1929 Benson Dutton had received "royal treatment" during his stay at the State College Hotel above the Corner Room, but ten years later the atmosphere was different. "We weren't allowed in the Corner Room," Judge Henry Smith '39 recalls of his years at Penn State. "There

were a number of 'greasy spoons' and a pool hall that we frequented, but in the nicer restaurants we weren't welcome."

"If I had not been married to a very understanding wife, who was with me there, it would have been very hard for me to get through," confirms Bridges A. Turner, '39g, '41g, who received a master's and a doctorate in industrial education from Penn State. As a graduate student, Turner was made an instructor in mathematics. "I would receive invitations to faculty receptions at President Hetzel's house," he remembers, "but I knew they had just gotten my name off of a list and didn't realize my race. I just wouldn't go, because I knew I wouldn't be wanted."

Another problem was haircuts. "No barber would cut a Negro's hair," Turner says. "Word got around that there was a barber in Lemont who would cut anybody's hair. So I went out there one day. There was a white man in the chair when I arrived and shortly after I got there a white lady came in. I didn't know what would happen, but I waited."

When the barber finished with the white man's haircut, Turner drew in his breath. The moment of truth had arrived. "He shook out his drape, and he motioned to me to sit in the chair," Turner recalls with satisfaction. "From that day on, he was my barber." But the problem of haircuts for blacks in State College would recur frequently through almost thirty more years.

Though the group of black students on campus was small at that time, there were enough, says Judge Smith, that they began to have their "own little affairs," as well as to participate in bi-racial organizations like the Student Christian Association.

"There were few times when we were invited to campus dances and so forth," Smith says, recalling a concert by Duke Ellington as one of few integrated social events. Although the black fraternities, by and large, didn't yet have houses, the Christian Association allowed

them to use the Ralph Watts Lodge, a cabin it owned at Shingletown Gap, for "house parties."

The Christian Association, reports Smith, was the only organization on campus that was concerned with racial issues, and it was the forum for discussions and a place to air problems black students were encountering. "I don't recall that anything ever really changed because of it," Smith says, "but it was a place where people—white and black—began to talk about these things."

"We weren't raised to speak out or demonstrate," he continues. "We tried to go into restaurants, but never had much success."

However, Smith and many of his counterparts during the late thirties pioneered in integrating many campus organizations. Although blacks were barred from white fraternities, they joined in other clubs and activities. "I was a joiner," Smith confides, "and I belonged to the Sociology Club, was active in campus politics and was on the Cap 'n' Gown Committee." Herb Nipson '40, who later became executive editor of the highly successful *Ebony* magazine, was one of the first black students to write for the *Collegian*.

In the 1940s another wave of black migration from the South to the North began. After the death of Roosevelt, President Truman took a firm stand on rights for blacks, to the pleased surprise of many. He took steps to end all segregation in the United States Armed Forces and formed a Committee on Civil Rights.

Throughout these years the Jim Crow concept of "separate but equal" was attacked through the courts at the direction of the NAACP and CORE (the Congress on Racial Equality), formed in 1942 for the purpose of working to end segregation in public places. These organizations pointed out repeatedly that separation based on race is inherently unequal. They attacked the rigid restrictions of Jim Crow practices, including laws which kept blacks from voting, infe-

rior schooling for black children, and second-class status associated with "colored waiting rooms" and back-door lunch counters, which prevented blacks from full participation in society.

"All we could do was just stay home and study," remembers Rufus O. Williams '48, who first attended Penn State in the fall of 1941. "Everything was all white" when Williams left Penn State for two years of military service, and when he returned in 1945 the atmosphere was beginning to change.

Many black men were returning from service in the war overseas with a heightened awareness of the sacrifices they were making for democratic rights often not accorded them. Having experienced little racial prejudice among Europeans, returning black veterans were ready "to take stands on things," recalls Williams. Even in placid State College, there was a growing impatience with segregationist practices.

In the late forties it was still virtually impossible for black students to get a haircut in State College, and repeated negotiations between University representatives and local barbers had failed to resolve differences. The barbers claimed they "didn't know how to cut Negro hair" or that "it would ruin business." NAACP negotiators also failed to bring a resolution.

Finally, on December 11, 1948, CORE members held a rally on the steps of Old Main, and between 250 and 300 supporters marched down the Mall and through town, past the six barber-shops. Demonstrations and picketing went on for a number of weeks, and again in January and February of 1949, but eventually dwindled.

Dean of Men Ray Warnock had made his position clear in a letter to his assistant dean, Danny DeMarino '38, '41g:

I think our office should object to being a party to a boycott of local barber-shops. The boycott method is not a common practice in State College,

and I hope it never will be. I doubt if it would be effective. I think it would also arouse such feelings as to increase rather than lessen racial intolerance hereabouts. Further, the use of a boycott logically implies that educational methods for combatting intolerance, in our schools and churches as well as elsewhere, had failed. I don't think that we in an educational community should be willing to make that surrender.

The dean was correct in his assessment of the effectiveness of the boycott. Although it was held and it drew attention to the situation, the solution was found only when the NAACP helped establish a new nondiscriminatory barbershop, where both black and white received services. Many considered this a weak alternative to true integration, but the policies of the other shops were slow to change.

Throughout the forties, the University was a proponent of interracial activities—"with the exception of mixed dating and dancing"—as the Dean of Men stated in his barbershop letter. During the summer of 1945, thirteen black and thirteen white students shared the Fairmont Fellowship House, living "with unity and cooperation," according to a 1947 editorial published in the student magazine *Critique* about the evils of Jim Crow.

In addition, the Athletic Department at Penn State took an early stand on racial equality, refusing to participate in competitions that did not welcome their—or others'—black athletes.

"There was no segregation on the track team," says Rufus Williams, who had chosen Penn State for the reputation of its track team and who was on both track and cross-country varsity teams. When the team traveled, he recalls that, unlike when they were home, they roomed and ate together as well as competing together. "We didn't have any problems there," he emphasizes. "It was up to the individual to perform."

For other teams, problems arose. When the University of Mississippi would not permit Penn State football stars Wally Triplett '49 and Den-nie Hoggard '49 to play on their field in November 1947, college officials declined to go at all. That December, Penn State played in the Cotton Bowl, black athletes and all, in what was the first interracial football game in Texas. Since blacks could not even enter Dallas hotels, the team had to stay at a naval air station fourteen miles from the city, behind a guarded fence, eating mess hall chow, and all but engulfed in military restrictions the ex-GIs thought they had left behind forever.

And despite the fact that there were no blacks on the Penn State boxing team at that time, officials refused to participate in the all-white Sugar Bowl tournament in New Orleans that same year.

Despite the stands taken by the University, progressive for the times, John Biggers '48, '48g, '54g, a World War II veteran who received bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Penn State, says that without the families of professors [P.W.] Bixby, [Abram W.] VanderMeer, [Edward and Renee] Abramson and [Viktor] Lowenfeld and Mr. [William S. '11] Hoffman, the registrar, he couldn't have lived in State College.

"They were the only ones who treated me like a human being," Biggers states. "Without them, I would rather have been on the chain gang in Louisiana. We were harassed for trying to eat in restaurants. If any white girl liked you and had the human decency to even walk across campus with you, she was expelled from the University. It was the unwritten policy."

Julian Cook remembers

coming to State College with his father in 1948 to decide if he would attend Penn State. "The man who was registrar at the time, Bill Hoffman, had taught my father, so there was this rapport between them. We stayed at the State College Hotel and ate breakfast and lunch at the Corner Room. All the so-called Joe College types came through. They impressed me. Penn State just seemed to fit my idea of what college

should be—big, with a great football team. On the way home we picked up a hitchhiker who happened to be one of the co-captains on the football team, and we talked sports all the way to Washington. I was thrilled."

Like many other freshmen, Cook was assigned to a campus in the state college system, Kutztown in his case. There, the promise of his visit to Penn State didn't materialize. "It was a long, hard

Star athlete and outstanding student H. Jesse Arnelle '55 went on from student body president at Penn State to earn an LL.B. degree from Dickinson in 1962. An attorney practicing in California, he has been a member of Penn State's Board of Trustees since 1969.

Earning letters in track and football, Den-nie W. Hoggard Jr. '49 was held as an exemplar of good sportsmanship during his years at Penn State. He is retired as president of Hoggard Jewelers, Inc. in Philadelphia.

Finding no segregation on Penn State's track team, Rufus O. Williams '48 made up his mind he would fight the discrimination he experienced elsewhere. During his long teaching career he was able to influence students to "use their talents to benefit mankind." Now retired, but an active artist, he is painting a series on the Stations of the Cross.

Active on campus, but still "missing out on a lot of the fun," Julian A. Cook Jr. '52 developed an interest in civil rights. After leaving Penn State, he earned a J.D. degree from Georgetown University in 1957. He has been a U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan since 1978. He is the recipient of many humanitarian awards and was named a Penn State Distinguished Alumnus in 1985.

Cotton Bowl pioneer Wallace Triplett III '49 was one of the blacks to play in the first interracial football game in Texas. He earned football letters in 1948 and '49 and now owns Bivins Management Company in Detroit.



year," he says of 1948-49. "There were two blacks in my dormitory, my roommate and me." At the beginning of the next year, Cook transferred to University Park.

"Even then, my college days were not the fun days I had looked forward to," Cook admits. "Not to say that it was a struggle each day, that I was fighting against the odds. That wasn't the case at all. But there was nothing to let us know that we were wanted and were part of the community."

By Cook's time here, black fraternities had their own houses, but they "paled in comparison to the white

fraternity houses," he recalls. Most socializing remained segregated, and what was integrated was restricted. Protest demonstrations, like those that had erupted the year before Cook arrived in State College, were non-existent.

"We weren't 'militant' in the sense in which the word is used today," Cook states. "We didn't really have any concept of that. We tried to do smaller things. We had an exhibit about W.E.B. DuBois during Negro History Week, things like that, to try to educate people." As a member of the NAACP, Cook also participated in projects requesting

reinstatement of professors dismissed for "subversive tendencies." On the eve of the McCarthy era, many faculty members across the country were fired for refusing to sign loyalty oaths. "Our efforts in that regard weren't successful," Cook remembers, "but we felt that we were losing faculty members who were sympathetic to our problems and concerns."

"We were still emerging from a largely segregated society," recalls Jesse Arnelle '55, who, as a much sought-after star high-school pupil and athlete, had chosen Penn State over several Ivy League

institutions. "The issue of racism was not talked about very much. People tended not to want to be expressive or combative about it, to try to evolve relationships without incurring the incredible emotions of both sides.

"As I was going through the experience of being an undergraduate here, my focus was really on education and sports," Arnelle continues. "There were no such things as demonstrations. When I arrived at Penn State, my primary objective, barring none, was to get the best education possible by investing myself into that educational program 101 percent—and also to do

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MY ENTRANCE . . .

After a person's application to attend Penn State has been accepted, he receives a list of the living accommodations. The information on the list is very complete, including the names and addresses of every person who will keep students, the numbers they will keep, and the cost. Quite a number of private homes are listed, some of which can accommodate only one student. I looked over the list and selected living accommodations on West Fairmount Avenue with a Mrs. Shacklette. I wrote Mrs. Shacklette and she answered immediately. The exact copy of her letter is:

125 West Fairmount Ave.,
State College, Penna.,
June 7, 1938.

Mr. B.A. Turner,
A. M. & N. College,
Pine Bluff, Ark.

Dear Mr. Turner,
Thank you for your letter of June 4.
I shall be quite pleased to save the room for you. We have only one room which we rent in the summer, the rent being \$3.00 a week.

Sincerely yours,
Madalynn C. Shacklette.

I replied, indicating I would occupy the room and expected to arrive at

Penn State June 22, 1938.

Mrs. Turner suggested that I tell Mrs. Shacklette that I was a Negro. I told her if you were going with me I would, but I am going alone, no place in any of the material or correspondence from Penn State is the question of race mentioned, and I shall not be the one to bring up the question. She became very insistent that I inform Mrs. Shacklette of my racial identity, which I refused to do. She finally reminded me that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

On June 17, 1938, I left Pine Bluff, Arkansas, en route to Penn State by way of St. Louis, Missouri. Mrs. Turner went as far as St. Louis with me to visit relatives. I left St. Louis June 20, stopped overnight in Indianapolis, Indiana, with an aunt of mine who lives there. I arrived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 22, in the early morning. I checked the train schedule and learned that I would get to Penn State about noon. Endeavoring to be very business-like with my prospective landlady, I sent her a telegram stating the hour of my arrival.

Penn State is not on a railroad; your method of going there by public

transportation is by bus. I rode the train to Tyrone, approximately twenty-eight miles from Penn State. When I got off the train in Tyrone all the people I saw were white. In a short while the bus came, everybody on it was white. There were two vacant seats on the bus, one by a young lady and the other by an elderly lady. I chose to sit by the latter. When the bus arrived at Penn State, I got off, yet saw only white people.

A man was leaning against a taxicab. I went to him and told him where I wanted to go. He looked at me a bit queerly and said, "Are you sure that is the address?" I told him yes, I am sure. We got in his cab, he started off, stopped his car suddenly and said, "Mr., I don't mean to be inquisitive, but are you sure that is the address?" At that time I took from my pocket a letter from Mrs. Shacklette and showed him her address. He said, "That's it, let's go."

He drove on to her house stopped his car, got out, took my bag, and he and I started up the walk to the house. Just as we started up the steps a stout lady opened the door very hurriedly, wringing her hands and saying, "Are you B.A. Turner; are you B.A. Turner?" I am, was the reply. She stated somewhat

excitedly, "We don't keep colored folks," and slammed the door. By that time the taxi driver and I had walked up to the door. She opened the door again and said in a more calm tone of voice, "I am sorry, but I didn't know you were colored." I replied, I am also sorry, but none of the announcements said anything about color and I just thought you kept people. She said, "Yes, but we don't keep colored people," and closed the door again.

The taxi driver seemed more disturbed than I. I was not excited, angry, or surprised. He said, "I know a family that keeps Negro students; suppose we go to see them." We went to 140 N. Patterson Street to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, who were also white. They were interested in keeping students irrespective of race, so I stayed with them.

Excerpted from Dr. Turner's book From a Plow to a Doctorate So What? first published in 1945 and sold by the Student Christian Association of Hampton Institute where Turner taught vocational education. It was republished by the author in 1985 for sale by the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, where he lives with his wife, Gladys.

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

as well as I could in sports.

"There was a lot of feeling about wanting to achieve, to do the best you possibly could. The idea that was planted in us was that the power of education was the

power of liberation, not just liberation of the spirit or the soul or the mind, but liberation from the crushing burden of becoming just another person in domestic service or at the factory. You could do something better with your life. We were often the first in our families to go to college. That set the tone for our parents' expectations and our expectations of ourselves."

By the time Arnelle arrived on campus in 1950, only one or two State College barber-shops remained closed to blacks. And, although Arnelle says he experienced moments that reminded him it was a "black-white world," there were many more times when he felt that he was judged solely on "human qualities."

In the spring of 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the case of *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* that racial segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional and illegal. "We could not anticipate the profundity and impact of that decision," Arnelle recalls. "When it came out, I was a junior, and it was marvelous, but none of us had a real sense of what all that meant. The impact of what it meant—socially and politically and economically—we could not grasp." Nor could students at Penn State, with its environment of gradual integration, imagine the years of turmoil and violence that would ensue.

In the fall of 1954 Jesse Arnelle was elected All-University President, the first black to hold that office. He received 74.5 percent of the vote in an election in which more students than ever (46.8 percent of the total) had participated. That he was elected so overwhelmingly was a testament to his personal popularity as an All-American basketball and football star and an outstanding student. It was also a reflection of the changing racial climate at Penn State and in the nation.

To be continued.
Next: 1955-75.

WEEKENDS ON CAMPUS

Friday, March 17

St. Patrick's Day

Artists Series: Andre Watts, Eisenhower, 8 pm

Saturday March 18

Gymnastics: (M) Pittsburgh; (W) Ohio State, Rec Hall, 8 pm

Synergy—A Class Act, Alumni-sponsored Class Talent Show, Schwab, 8 pm

Friday, March 24

Volleyball: (M) Navy, Rec Hall, 7:30 pm

Saturday March 25

Volleyball: (M) George Mason, Rec Hall, 7:30 pm

Friday, March 31

Alumni Assn. Executive Board Meeting through 4/1

Saturday, April 1

Proth 80th Anniversary Reunion
Gymnastics: (W) NCAA Northeast Regional, Rec Hall, 7 pm

Friday, April 7

Artists Series: North Carolina Dance Theater, Eisenhower, 8 pm

URTC: *The Crucible*, Playhouse, 8 pm

Saturday, April 8 College of Science Expo, 10 am to 5 pm

URTC: *The Crucible*, Playhouse, 8 pm

Friday, April 14

Black Alumni Reunion through 4/16

Volleyball: EIVA Quarterfinals, Rec Hall

Artists Series: I Musici de Montreal, Schwab, 8 pm

URTC: *The Crucible*, Playhouse, 8 pm

Saturday, April 15

Phi Psi 500, noon-4 pm

University Choir Concert, Grace Lutheran

Church, 8 pm

Volleyball: EIVA Quarterfinals, Rec Hall

Sunday, April 16

Symphonic Blue Band Concert, Eisenhower, 3 pm

Singing Lions Concert, Schwab, 4:30 pm

Friday, April 21

Alumni Council through 4/22

Concert Choir Chamber Singers, Recital Hall, 8 pm

Volleyball: EIVA Championships, Rec Hall

Saturday, April 22

Blue-White Football Game

Glee Club Concert, Schwab, 8 pm

Volleyball: EIVA Championships, Rec Hall

Sunday, April 23

Sy Barash Regatta, Bald Eagle State Park, 10 am-5 pm

White Band Concert, Kern Plaza, 1 pm Philharmonic Concert, Recital Hall, 3 pm

Saturday, May 13

Commencement

Sunday, May 14

Mother's Day

Commencement

Friday, May 19 through 20

Club Leaders Conference

Shaver's Creek Environmental Center offers nature events each weekend. Call (814) 863-2000. Stone Valley Recreational Area is open for boating. Call (814) 863-0762.

EXHIBITS

Museums are closed Easter Sunday, March 26

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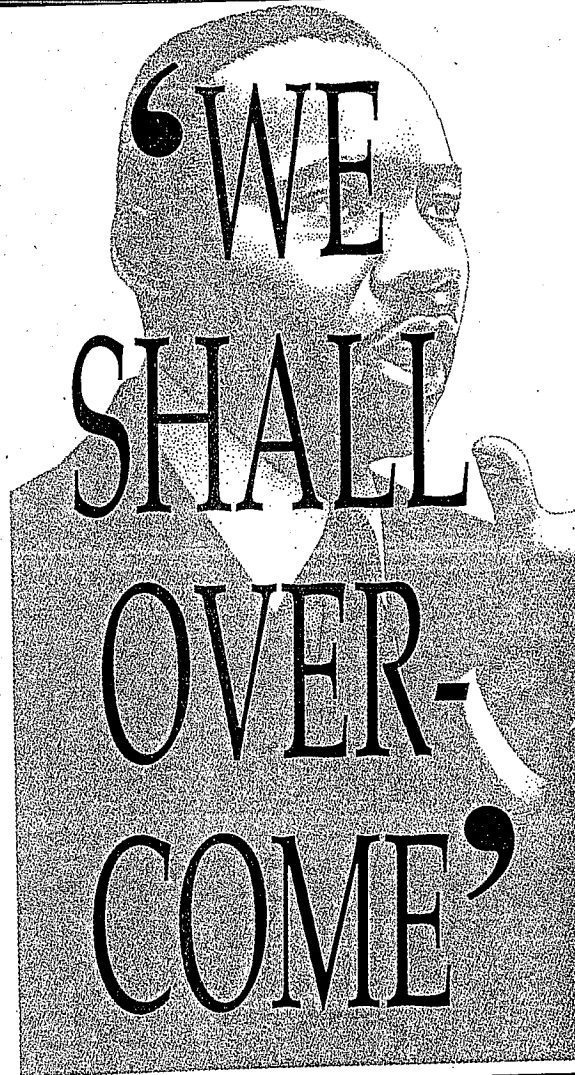
Editor's note: In the first article of this series on "The Black Experience at Penn State" (March/April Penn Stater), we examined the years 1900-55 through the eyes of several distinguished black Penn Staters. We traced the history of this collective yet individual experience from the enrollment of the first known black student through a time when local children would mistake the first black coed for "Aunt Jemima" up to the beginnings of a small black community within Penn State and its progress toward integration into the larger college environment.

Now we focus on the Civil Rights years, 1955-75, although some whom we have interviewed were part of the University earlier than 1955 and several have continued or resumed their connections beyond 1975. During this twenty-year period we find not only the greatest strides made toward a society of equal opportunity; we also find the basis for new barriers to the fulfillment of that goal. For a time, a heightened social consciousness, inspired by such leaders as President John F. Kennedy and the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and in different ways by the likes of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, seemed to grip the entire nation. It faded as quickly as it had come, but leaving legacies of thought that greatly influence us today.

During the 1954-55 academic year at Penn State, Jesse Arnelle served as all-University president, the first black student to be so elected. Arnelle, by giving "101 percent" to his athletic and academic pursuits, had been able to overcome the odds against his success. Active in a number of traditionally all-white organizations such as the student government and Lion's Paw, Arnelle felt himself part of the Penn State community.

THE BLACK Experience

At Penn State



1955-1975, THE CRESCENDO YEARS

Others didn't feel quite the same. The fifties generation of black Penn Staters, athletes and otherwise, didn't have teachers or counselors of like color to turn to in times of

trouble or programs designed to smooth social transitions or fill academic gaps. Subsequently, attrition rates were high, and many black athletes recruited for their physical

prowess had academic difficulty.

"I never graduated from Penn State. I flunked English composition twice," states Charles Blockson '56, now the author of several books and articles for such magazines as *National Geographic*. "We didn't get the backup.

"We could play sports, football and all, and see our teammates go out to parties," he continues, noting that social isolation was a problem as well. "Sometimes we were invited to one of the [three] black fraternities for an open house, but other than that it was lonely. It was painful. I remember Lenny [Moore '56] saying, 'How can they cheer for us during the game, and after it we feel more like men without a country?' We didn't have any place to go."

Moore agrees. "We didn't encounter some of the worst things," he says, "but we were never fully included in the Penn State family. It was a good, worthwhile experience that prepared me for the larger world, but even though I wanted to, I could never feel completely Penn State Proud."

The same "double consciousness" that Blockson and Moore felt was experienced by many black Penn Staters of the mid fifties, and led to interest in groups like *Entre Nous*, "founded in 1955 . . . to promote and develop social, academic and cultural interests of the students at Penn State and also to promote interracial understanding." (*Daily Collegian*, Sept. 20, 1958)

According to Dr. Preston Williams, one-time advisor to *Entre Nous* and, as assistant chaplain from 1956 to 1962, one of the University's first full-time black professionals, this group dealt with the problem of "creating a community, providing means for fellowship and opportunities for extracurricular activities" for black students. Despite what Williams perceived as a lack of institutional support for dealing with racism, he found "a coterie of faculty and community members

THE BLACK Experience

who were open," and his family led "a wonderful life at Penn State."

Indeed, life for blacks all over the North was pleasant and rich compared with that of their counterparts beginning the struggle for civil rights in the nation's South. In December of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, tired from a long day's work, refused to surrender her bus seat to a white man and was arrested. With the leadership of the young baptist minister, Martin Luther King Jr., Montgomery blacks stood up to threats, violence and legislative and police pressures, boycotting their city's public transportation in protest of segregation and second-class treatment on the buses—until in November 1956 the Supreme Court ruled such segregation unconstitutional and illegal.

The fall of 1956 also marked the admittance of the first black student—Autherine Lucy—to the University of Alabama, where 3,000 segregationist students and townspeople rioted until she was expelled. Violence—in the form of cross-burnings, fires, bombings, beatings, murders and confrontational mobs—erupted all across the South in response to efforts to integrate public schools and facilities and to register blacks to vote.

On the Penn State campus, although many black students felt restricted due to their race, most were concentrating on becoming integrated into the academic and social environment. Even the formation of *Entre Nous* was viewed "with some suspicion," says Ron Davenport '58. "The question was: to what extent would we be segregating ourselves," he recalls.

"We were concerned that there not be any artificial barriers, and then we would take

it from there," he explains, pointing out that his own bid for Interfraternity Council president was well received and came close to succeeding. Although fraternity life remained basically segregated and "there was an obvious difference in terms of resources, as best reflected by the fraternity houses," the black students accepted the situation. "We were concerned about putting in our four years, graduating on time and getting a job," Davenport says.

But early in 1960 four black college students quietly studying at an all-white Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparked a nonviolent protest movement that spread like wildfire, leaving virtually no corner of the nation unaffected. By August of that year alone, 70,000 American citizens, black and nonblack, had participated in similar peaceful sit-ins across the country; nearly 4,000 of them had been jailed. Led by a new organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), many of these protestors came from the ranks of high schools and universities and brought different ideas and new energy to the efforts of older groups like CORE and the NAACP.

With the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in January 1961, the Civil Rights movement received another boost. Putting the force of the federal government behind the civil rights legislation being written onto the books during the latter fifties and early sixties, Kennedy facilitated desegregation and fuller citizenship for blacks in the South.

During 1961 a thousand "Freedom Riders" rode integrated buses through southern states to test a 1955 ruling by the Interstate Commerce Commission that had been upheld by the Supreme Court in 1960. They were met by mobs and riots, but Kennedy backed their cause by sending federal marshals as protection.

The same tactic was put to work when James Meredith

enrolled at the University of Mississippi in 1962. He was accompanied for the entire year by 320 United States marshals, and it took additional Army and federalized National Guard troops fifteen hours to quell the initial rioting. After this demonstration of the government's position, other bastions of white higher education in the South were more quietly integrated in the following years.

Although there was a decided lack of activism at Penn State in the late fifties, black students were becoming acutely aware of their small numbers and the paucity of black faculty and staff members serving as mentors and role models.

"My father's [Benson Dutton '33] great love for Penn State influenced me to attend," says Marie Dutton Brown '62, "and I went to Ogontz campus for two years, which gave me a transition period. But when I look back on those years, I have to ask myself how we survived. We banded together like a family, but were alone in that small group. It was a lovely environment otherwise, but we had no guidance."

Not only did black students lack adults to turn to, there remained problems with housing and services like hair styling. Although just one barbershop remained strictly off-limits to blacks, there was only one other—Bob's—where they felt welcomed. The increasing numbers of black women had even more difficulty. "I spent many a Saturday driving people to Altoona and Tyrone [for haircuts]," recalls Harold Cheatham '61, who had come to Penn State as a veteran and with a car.

Although there were still plenty of instances of racism, Cheatham says that generally, "there was a peaceful coexistence" in the community, and he had supportive personal mentors within his academic department. The black students "tried to shield each other from unpleasantness and to work through any slights they might experience. We were sustained by our sense of purpose," he notes.

Throughout the early sixties, black students at Penn State were still "concentrating on surviving academically," according to Jack Burley '65, who started out in engineering and switched to business, another nearly all-white program. Says Col. Guion Bluford '64, "Penn State was my number-one choice because I wanted to be an aerospace engineer from the time I was in junior high school. I came out of an integrated environment, I studied with other students and wasn't a very social person. I never considered myself different from any other student," he emphasizes.

"The idea was to go to Happy Valley, get a good education and then go home. I didn't care much about the social life at first," agrees Dr. Bruce Trotman '65. He remembers State College as being like "the America you always read about," in other words, overwhelmingly white, but he found himself readily accepted and was elected class president both his junior and senior years.

Trotman recalls that when he and another black student were being pledged to Acacia fraternity, which had its roots in the South, the group's national director threatened to revoke the chapter's charter. However, the fraternity leaders held their ground, the conflict was resolved, and he joined the organization.

Indeed, according to a January 18, 1964 *Collegian* article, the University Senate had ruled in 1962 that "all active social organizations on campus . . . must eliminate constitutional clauses which restrict membership because of race, religion or creed" by 1965. Such restrictions had been disallowed for new groups since 1950 and had been officially illegal for honorary and professional organizations since 1953. Unofficially, they remained basically segregated.

By the time Birmingham police unleashed water hoses, attack dogs and billy clubs on crowds of non-violent demonstrators in 1963, the tide of national opinion on civil rights was

turning. Witnessing abuse of those who were seeking opportunities considered basic to most Americans, citizens of all colors were at least sympathetic. The voice of Martin Luther King Jr. had become a strong rallying point for the movement.

The triumphant March on Washington in August of 1963, with its crowd of 200,000 listening to speeches and singing such movement songs as "We Shall Overcome," marked a pinnacle for those, black and white, working toward racial justice.

Ten weeks later, President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, Texas, and Civil Rights workers faced new tests of their endurance—and President Johnson's commitment. Johnson maintained a firm stance and supported passage of new legislation that had been introduced by Kennedy the summer before his death. The following spring, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, outlawing discrimination in employment and public facilities and cutting off funds to state programs found discriminatory.

Racist elements in the South answered with characteristic violence, and during the summer of 1964 Mississippi became known as a land of terror. It was the summer that James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner—working to register black voters—disappeared into the bayou backwoods in Neshoba County; their bullet-ridden bodies were found several weeks later buried in an earthen dam. Between July and November more than a thousand Civil Rights workers were jailed and sixty-eight black homes, churches and community centers were bombed or torched in that state alone.

In 1960 Penn State students had picketed against the one barbershop in downtown State College that continued to reject black patrons, and in the fall of 1963 a group organized the Student Union for Racial Equality (SURE) to promote a "student integration protest movement on campus"

Collecting and reading were what kept Charles Blockson '56 going through his years at Penn State and beyond. Though he didn't pass English composition, today he is the author of five books and numerous articles in such magazines as *National Geographic*, is curator of the Afro-American Collection at Temple University, and holds honorary doctorates from Villanova and Lincoln universities.

A star on the football field, although he never felt quite a "part of the family," Lenny Moore '56 still holds Penn State's career rushing average record (6.2). He was a halfback for the Baltimore Colts from 1956 to 1957, was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1974, and now coordinates substance abuse programs for the juvenile services administration in Baltimore.

An early black staff member at Penn State, Dr. Preston Williams spent a good part of his tenure as assistant chaplain (1956-62) helping black students find a sense of community. He is now Houghton Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change at Harvard Divinity School.

After graduating from Penn State, Ronald Davenport '58 went on to Temple and Yale universities for LL.B. and LL.M. degrees in 1962 and 1963, then to serve as dean of Duquesne University's law school from 1970 to 1982, and to practice for the firm Buchanan Ingersoll P.C. Since 1972 he has been chairman of Sheridan Broadcasting Corporation, giving that endeavor his full attention since 1984. He was named a Penn State Distinguished Alumnus in 1975. His wife, Dr. Judith Loftin Davenport '61, is a Pittsburgh dentist.

Having kept a "secret love" for the University during his twenty years away, Dr. Harold Cheatham '61 returned in 1981 with advanced degrees from Colgate (M.S., 1969) and Case Western Reserve (Ph.D., 1973) and years of teaching experience. He is now associate professor of education and an active voice on racial issues in his field.

A fascination with people and books has stayed with Marie Dutton Brown '62 since her graduation with a major in psychology. With a variety of experience as a bookstore manager, senior editor for Doubleday and editor-in-chief of *Elan* magazine, in 1984 she founded her own company providing editorial consulting and literary agent services in New York City.

His undergraduate years marked the beginnings of his professional life, his military career and his relationship with his wife, Col. Guion Bluford '64 recalls. With a master's and a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, he became America's first black astronaut in space when he flew aboard the *Challenger* in 1983, the same year he was named a Penn State Distinguished Alumnus.

Learning "how to operate in a world that is predominantly white" is something Jack Burley '65 values about his experience at Penn State. Holding various finance positions with Heinz U.S.A. over almost twenty years and earning an M.B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh along the way, he was named vice president for finance and administration for the company in 1987. He is married to Dr. Joanne Cobb Burley '64, assistant vice president for academic affairs at Chatham College.

While earning his B.A. in arts and letters with an emphasis in science, Dr. Bruce Trotman '65 was intent on pursuing his lifelong dream of becoming a medical doctor. He received his M.D. in 1969 from the University of Pennsylvania, and now is director of medicine at the Methodist Hospital of Brooklyn, professor of medicine at the SUNY Health Science Center and a respected internist and gastroenterologist.

Active with the religious community, Dr. Jack Spiese '61g, '68g helped bring a black family—the Shades—to live in State College in 1968. He maintains an active interest in racial issues, especially at Temple University, where he currently teaches in the intellectual heritage program.

Always a "joiner," Cynthia Ackron Baldwin '66, '74g belonged not only to Delta Sigma Theta but to the University Readers and Scrolls. Today she practices law with Palkovitz and Palkovitz and is a visiting professor at Duquesne University's School of Law. In addition, she is president-elect of the Penn State Alumni Association and maintains a wealth of other civic and charitable activities. Her husband is Art Baldwin '69, a project manager with the U.S. Department of Energy's Pittsburgh Energy Technology Center.



CYNTHIA ACKRON BALDWIN '66

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

(*Daily Collegian*, October 31, 1963). Still, Jack Burley recalls, "There didn't seem to be an enlightened consciousness in the Penn State community, black or white, at that time."

Most of the activism that did exist at University Park was focused on the South, where the problems seemed most urgent. SURE members conducted fund-raising campaigns to support Penn Staters who went South to assist in voter-registration drives, and others worked through such community organizations as the Unitarian church, which sponsored an exchange program for high schoolers in State College and Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Dr. Jack Spiese '61g, '68g was a white student who got involved after making friends with a number of blacks who had come North to pursue opportunities for graduate study still denied them in the South.

"I never felt that people [in the State College area] were malicious or mean-spirited," Spiese notes. "They just had not been exposed to different people, had not had the opportunity to enrich their lives that way. There was a constant uneasiness [about blacks]."

But although racism was not found in the uglier forms seen in the southern states, it became an issue of discussion from time to time. Two controversies, for instance, hit the pages of the *Daily Collegian* in November 1963. In one, production of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones* was postponed and then carried out with fewer black actors than originally called for, due to sentiments that "the play was derogatory to Negroes" and the fact that few were interested in participating. (*Daily Collegian*, April 9, 1964)

The other incident involved the comments of a mathematics instructor to a black student named Richard Greene, who had accidentally turned over a chair during a class. Greene reported in a letter to the *Collegian* (November 5, 1963) that the professor said, "You don't have to make all that noise in here. . . This isn't Mississippi," and followed that with comments about lynching "niggers." Both the professor and the department head apologized publicly, and it was generally agreed that the intent had been "humor" rather than malice. The furor died.

Most such issues would similarly blow over or be quietly resolved, but there was a growing consciousness on the part of black Penn Staters that these less dramatic forms were indeed still racism—and detrimental. Indeed, it was becoming harder for Penn State to remain untouched by outside events, as student organizations were sponsoring such speakers as Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy. In addition,

the issue of de facto segregation in the North, particularly in the public schools, was bringing confrontation closer to home.

There was also a growing impatience with local incidences of discrimination. Hair cuts and housing remained problematic for blacks in State College. "University Park provided a haven," recalls Cynthia Ackron Baldwin '66, '74g, "while State College, other than the

religious community, did not.

"My husband [then friend, Art Baldwin '69] was over at my dorm looking at the [housing] ads in the paper one day," she continues. "He called one place that was in a home, and they said, 'Please come over. We can show it to you right away. Nobody has taken it.' He went right over from my dorm, knocked on the door. The curtains kind

continued on page 48



ROD WOODSON '69



Douglass Association members await a meeting in Old Main. (See p. 49 for profile of Woodson.)

THE BLACK Experience

of rustled, and people looked out, and the curtain closed, but he persisted. Finally, a woman—in her late fifties—came to the door, and when Art said he was there to see the room, she told him that he couldn't see the room because her mother wasn't home. Then she shut the door in his face."

"In the downtown establishments you would find a fair amount of integration in terms of [campus] people choosing their company," says Barry Robinson '67, "and many townspeople were put off by it. I remember, particularly, times when white females who were with black males were threatened and given derogatory remarks by young males from the town."

Among students things were somewhat more open, even if tenuous. Robinson recalls meeting his first roommate, a white student from Beaver Falls. "He was clearly stunned. I don't think he had ever had any personal relationship with a black person or any other minority before," says Robinson, "but over time we found that we had a number of things in common. It proved to be a good learning experience for both of us."

Because Cynthia Baldwin felt that her sorority should participate in the annual Panhellenic Council dinner, the group elected her to be their "woman of the year" and therefore their representative. Because escorts for the dinner were assigned from the Interfraternity Council, which had no black members, Baldwin knew hers would be white. "The fateful evening arrived," she says, "and he came to the lobby at Simmons and I went out to meet him. We stood there, and finally I said, 'No one told you I was black, right?' He said, 'No,' and I told him it should be a great experi-

ence for both of us." It was, and they became good friends.

"There was—on both sides of the racial issue—more good will," says Roderic Woodson '69, despite the fact that he had gotten off to a lonely start with a white roommate who "hardly spoke" to him. "The black community was trying to participate and the white community was trying to embrace."

In fact, Woodson was one of a small group of black students that made a concerted effort to "infiltrate" campus life. "Our goal was that nothing of major significance would occur on the Penn State campus without black students being involved," he says, adding that they were quite successful by the time he became a senior. "Ted Thompson ['70] was vice president of USG [He became the second black president in 1969-70]. Clark Arrington ['69] was president of the Jazz Club. I was vice chairman of the senate committee on undergraduate student affairs. Another guy was chairman of the IFC control board. Carol Merrill ['70] was on the AWS Senate. Clark and I were members of Skull and Bones. . ."

"It was an era when people were starting to form friendships based on interests rather than skin color and to shake off a lot of restrictive bonds," remembers Barry Robinson. "The student population experienced a radical shift that you could see."

When I arrived there was a middle-America appearance, with loafers, sweaters, slacks and shirts being the standard dress of guys—with a tendency to wear sports jackets. The women were wearing Villager skirts and circle pins. Within a period of about a year . . . the style of dress and manner changed to jeans and sneakers, without ties or jackets."

Having always felt a "little out of the mainstream," Vivian Thomas Rankin '67 "didn't find the black community particularly more open to her than the white. My interests and personality led me to kindred spirits,

black and white," she says.

Despite the sense of growing acceptance on a personal level, blacks remained aware and concerned about their low numbers on the University Park campus and throughout the system. Although official records on race were not kept until the late sixties, students had for years been keeping informal head-counts of blacks on campus. Faculty members could be counted on fingers, and estimates of black students found them at far lower percentages than in the state's population. While the University was adding thousands of white students to its rolls annually, growth in the number of blacks seemed to them incremental. In 1964, the *Daily Collegian* reported that there were between two and three hundred blacks in the student body, less than 1.5 percent of the total.

On the national scene, the peaceful philosophy espoused by Dr. King was facing challenges. The policy of nonviolence suffered vicious blows in the South and encountered seemingly irrelevant for increasingly militant urban ghetto blacks in the North. Each summer after 1963 saw escalating rioting in urban areas, and a new voice emerged from younger black leaders.

Harkening back to early black nationalists such as Marcus Garvey, spokesmen like Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X of the Black Muslims and Stokely Carmichael of SNCC began to disavow nonviolence and to preach a doctrine of anger and self-identification—often separatism, if not the formation of a completely isolated "black nation" or a return to "Mother Africa." In 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale.

Other Civil Rights leaders criticized Martin Luther King Jr. for his involvement with a variety of causes, especially his active stance against the Vietnam War, although it was obvious that a number of social issues were coming together for many of the nation's people, black and

white.

Penn State students were no exception, and protests at University Park touched on several issues: race discrimination, student rights (especially residence hall and visitation matters for females), and the Vietnam War. It seemed, according to Barry Robinson that "those who were involved, were involved in everything."

"During the sixties there was a greater sense among college students of what their common interests were," reflects Rod Woodson. "We all faced the prospect of Vietnam, and it didn't matter what color you were, death came by the same size bullet. That was a common denominator across racial lines."

Much of the social life for black students remained primarily separate and closely connected to the three black fraternities and two black sororities—Omega Psi Phi, Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta, which gave blacks "a base from which to relate to the rest of the community," in the words of Rod Woodson.

"Independent" blacks were few and far between—Stan Lathan '67 was one of them. "I found at Penn State that a much wider and more interesting world was opening to me," he says, recalling that he witnessed his first play there—Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

As he became more enthralled with his academic pursuits in the fields of film and journalism, his interest in the fraternity he had pledged as a freshman waned and he chose not to become a member. "This caused some estrangement from my black fraternity brothers," he remembers, "and they gave me a hard time about it, but I felt like I was stifling myself by closing off the 'white' world."

By the close of 1967 King was working with others to heal some of the rifts among the country's blacks, through some changes in the programs and policies he supported and

with a renewed emphasis on the poor. On April 4, 1968, he was assassinated.

In May of that year about a hundred students, led by members of the Douglass Association, a black student group, confronted Vice President for Student Affairs Charles Lewis and presented a list of twelve demands "for changes in the University's policy regarding black students." (*Daily Collegian*, May 14, 1968) The students requested increases in black undergraduates, graduate students, professors, coaches and active athletes, as well as attention to black culture in

Finding friends with values similar to his own, **Barry Robinson '67** built a life for himself that "didn't draw much attention to a person's color." He graduated in prelaw and earned his law degree from New York University in 1970. Since 1982 he has been senior counsel for international investments and trade for the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington and currently serves on the Executive Board of the Penn State Alumni Association.

One of the founders of the Douglass Association, **Rod Woodson '69** participated in many protests in Old Main, including one in which students built a brick wall in President Eric Walker's office, symbolizing bar-

riers to communication and freedom. A 1973 graduate of Howard University's law school, he is now an attorney for the D.C. Housing Finance Agency in Washington.

Her one year at Mont Alto and three at University Park were pleasant ones for **Vivian Thomas Rankin '67**, who was "looking to see what experiences were available." A resident of Philadelphia, she is an independent consultant on matters of minority recruitment, human relations and fund raising—usually for nonprofit organizations and groups "trying to improve the quality of life."

Experiencing a cultural awakening at Penn State, **Stan Lathan '67** became intensely involved in his studies in journalism and broadcasting. He went on to win an Emmy within three years of graduating and is now a top independent television director and movie producer, with credits such as *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Beat Street* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Starting out at Capital, **Professor Daniel Walden** came to University Park to teach black history and culture in 1968. Author of numerous books and articles on African-American and Jewish history and literature, he is now professor of American studies, English and comparative literature.

Penn State's first black athletic coach, **Warren Coleman '74g** came to University Park as assistant track coach in 1968. He has acted in a number of positions involved with minority student recruitment and retention over the years and is assistant professor of physical education. He is also beloved as "the Witch Doctor," his funky radio announcing persona.

Long-time State College resident **Mary Godfrey** is Penn State's first known black full-time faculty member. She is retired assistant professor of art education and still lives in the area.

"Uncomfortable" on the campus, **Charlie Pittman '70** was nonetheless revered as a football star. He played pro seasons with St. Louis and Baltimore and is now advertising manager for the Times Publishing Newspaper company in Erie, Pennsylvania.

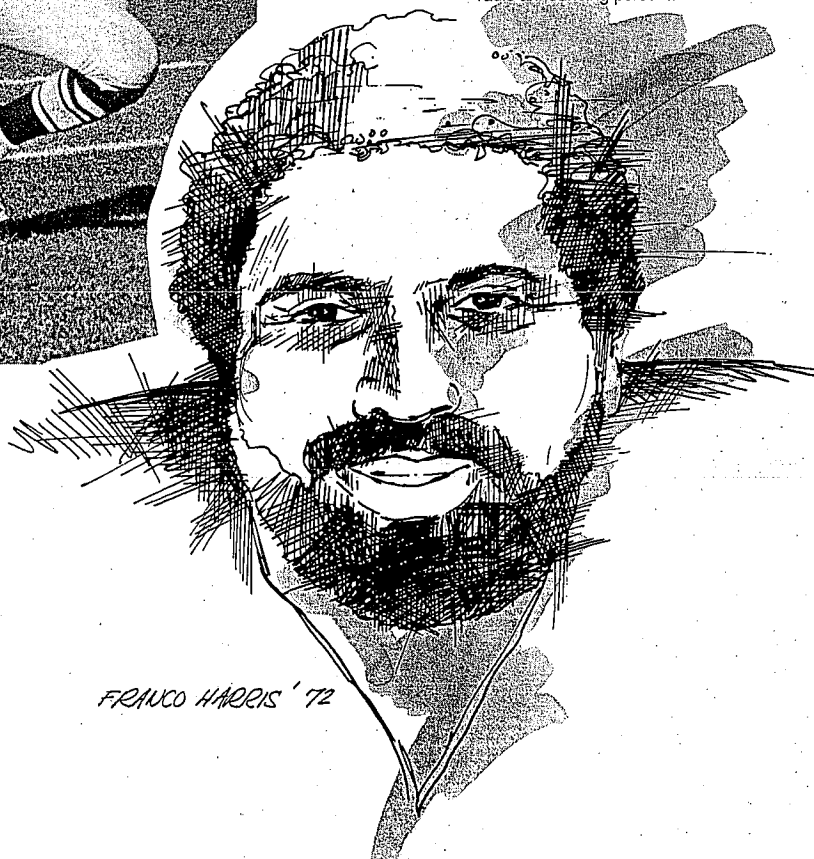
After working with the New Kensington fund-drive, **Thelma Price** came to University Park in 1969 to run the program for "culturally disadvantaged" students. She has been involved with advocacy for Penn State students—black and white—ever since and retired in 1985 as assistant vice president for student affairs.

Leading a full life, but noting the difficulties of undergraduates, **Dr. Robert Hutchins '70g, '73g** earned both master's and doctorate in educational administration at Penn State. A teacher and administrator in public schools and an instructor at several universities, in 1975 he became executive director of Philadelphia's Opportunities Academy of Management Training, an award-winning organization that offers courses for managers worldwide.

Independent yet soft-spoken, **Franco Harris '72** appreciated that his status as a football superstar was special. After a long and noteworthy professional football career in which he led the Pittsburgh Steelers to an unprecedented four Super Bowl victories, Harris is now devoting his energy and enthusiasm to his food-distributor business and to a variety of youth and health organizations. His wife is **Dana Dokmanovich '72**.

Her humanism enriched by her time at Penn State, **Dr. Margaret Lucas '73g** took with her a deep respect for people's differences that has served her well. A noted art educator, she is dean and professor of art at West Virginia University's College of Creative Arts in Morgantown.

Music brings people together, says **Andy Jackson '74**, of both his undergraduate years and current times in State College. He returned to the campus in 1986 to work for the office of employment, and is now pursuing graduate studies in education.



FRANCO HARRIS '72

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courses, facilities and collections.

A few days later, at the annual awards dinner of the Quarterback Club, where he was guest speaker, Jesse Arnelle shocked the audience by delivering an emotional plea for racial balance at the University and refusing to accept the traditional gift of a Nittany Lion statuette.

The first black to be elected to the board of trustees (in 1969), Arnelle was instrumental in changing its power structure. "The Executive Committee was a clubsy group of guys," he recalls, "and the full board would meet twice a year and just ratify their decisions." At his second meeting, Arnelle made a motion to increase the number of board meetings to nine a year, and the

motion carried with the number amended to seven. It was a change that challenged "the very foundation of how business had been conducted for a hundred-some years, . . . and was the beginning of a very enlightened board of trustees," he says.

The 1968-69 academic year also saw some response on the part of the Walker administration. In an experimental program, the University admitted several black students—known as the Harrisburg Ten—who did not meet regular academic standards. Daniel Walden, now professor of American studies, English and comparative literature, came to University Park from Capital campus and taught courses in black history and culture. The University also appointed Warren Coleman '74g as assistant track coach.

"I was told that Penn State was seeking a black coach to

help satisfy student demands," Coleman recalls, "but I told them to give me the job because I was qualified, not because I was black." Coleman was successful at recruiting some black track athletes to the University, but to prevent their being used as "puppets," he made sure "they understood they were coming for an education."

In spite of some accomplishments, race-related protests continued, and an air of militancy pervaded the campus. In the face of student demands, Walden, a well-qualified scholar of black culture, ceased teaching the subject and was replaced by a black instructor.

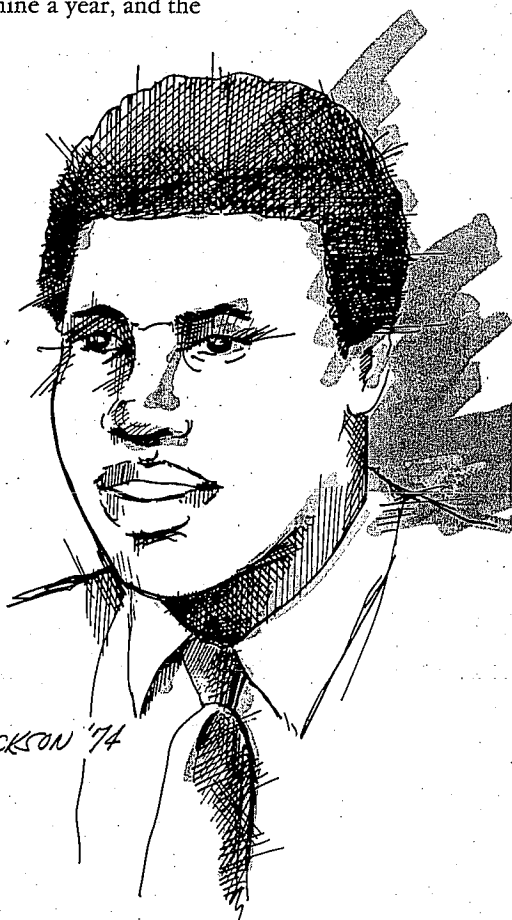
Retired professor of art education and Penn State's first

full-time black teacher when she began in 1957, Mary Godfrey recalls that students used pressure tactics to get others to join black protest organizations.

"The only harrassment I ever got in this community was from black students," she says. "I wanted to relate as *people*, but they didn't have any patience with that."

Many students themselves experienced conflicts about their roles at the University. "If the black students on campus were protesting, it sort of put me in limbo," recalls Charlie Pittman '70, "because I knew what my responsibilities were to the football team and the school.

"I remember one pep rally when the black students were going to walk out in the mid-



Alumni Blue Band plays at Homecoming. (See p. 49 for profile of Jackson.)

dle," he continues, speaking of an episode planned in support of Douglass Association demands and carried out on January 13, 1969. "They wanted Jim Kates ['70] and me to support the rally and walk out on our team." Pittman still thinks they made the right decision in staying with the team, but it served to separate them from their black peers even further than star-status did. Already isolated from his urban home community, this intensified Pittman's loneliness during his years at Penn State.

Later in 1969 the Douglass Association regrouped as the Black Student Union and was eventually superseded by the Black Caucus (1972). But in whatever name, students continually sought a stand on racial issues from the University's administration over the next several years.

When John Oswald replaced Eric Walker as president of Penn State in 1970, there were an estimated 1,300 blacks in attendance, about three percent of the student body. However, Oswald found that many were floundering academically and began to insist that the University "recruit for commencement." He began an effort to consolidate existing programs into the new Educational Opportunities Program (EOP).

Unfortunately, early EOP programs were beset with financial and leadership problems, mired in attitudes exhibited years earlier. During the fall of her sophomore year, Vivian Thomas Rankin had been injured in an automobile accident, but had returned to school with a neck brace to finish the semester. When her final grades arrived, she had received a "D" in her major, and she went to her professor.

"I didn't ask him to change the grade, or to be easy on me because of my injury," she recalls. "I explained the situation and asked him to allow me to retake the course." He refused, telling her that "because of the deprivations of her culture and race," he wouldn't expect her to do any better. "I was third-generation college-educated, and I

had traveled all over the world," she says.

The assumption was that "all blacks were culturally disadvantaged and all culturally disadvantaged students were black," asserts Thelma Price, long-time Penn State administrator, who retired in 1985 as Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs.

Describing 1969 to 1971 as the "Ya'll Come Years," Price recalls that there was little help to fill academic gaps for students lacking in preparation—black or any other color. "The University was recruiting indiscriminately," she notes, and the attrition rate was high.

Starting in 1971 Price and others worked to reorganize and consolidate EOP and other programs, to open them to needy students of all races and to provide transitional and follow-up programs that would assist with academic and personal problems.

While these programs were being put into place, the campus atmosphere seemed to relax and breathe a sigh of relief. Dr. Robert Hutchins '70g, '73g found a collegial and supportive environment in the education department where he was studying, and a wide professional interest in urban and racial concerns.

"Socially, I had fun at Penn State," says Franco Harris '72. "I remember times like my freshman year, when Penn State beat UCLA out in California. When the game was over there were ten thousand people out on College Avenue, and it was great. Nobody cared about race or whatever—we just all celebrated."

Aware of his special status as a football star, Harris acknowledges that his method of fighting discrimination, even in those days, was by using his position to have "contact with different groups of people. I felt that if people could accept me for what I am, being half Italian and half black," he says, "then they could accept others, too."

As United States involvement in Indochina was grinding to a halt in the

first half of the seventies, with the end of the draft in 1973 and the gradual withdrawal of troops completed by 1975, general student unrest was lessening. And years of black activism were slowing down. Many blacks were disillusioned with the rhetoric of black nationalism and its lack of concrete benefit. Nonviolent confrontation as a policy was losing its feasibility and impact.

In addition, the nation as a whole faced employment troubles and economic hard times, which were reflected in the priorities of the populace. Among poor urban blacks, an upswing in the use of drugs and the seeming inescapability of the ghetto created despair and disinterest.

Those blacks with opportunities for higher education returned to a more survival-oriented mentality in the early years of the seventies. On campuses across the country, including Penn State, there was a return to quieter times; the individualist approach of Franco Harris became the norm.

Dr. Margaret Lucas '73g enrolled at Penn State to study art education because of the fine reputation of that department. Putting her education first, she remarks, "I didn't make it a policy to do social things with other blacks, but spent my spare time on research or in the studio. I was aware of the choices I was making. I knew that there were things I had to do to be in a position to change things. And I was creating opportunities to talk with people, to demonstrate that I had something to contribute to the dominant culture."

Similarly, Andrew Jackson '74 was in a fraternity that maintained the expectation that members would be involved in the wider University community. "I was in the Blue Band and went to football games and traveled every weekend," he reports. "My wife [then girlfriend, Victoria Torres] was Puerto Rican, so I got to experience their food and music and culture, which was different from mine. I was in the USG Supreme Court, so I saw all the

constitutions from all the organizations. I was in the United Soul Ensemble so I had spiritual relationships."

For others it might be sports or academics, but Jackson found that music in particular was something that brought people together and helped them to "bridge cultural differences."

Although after 1972 it seemed that students seldom gathered muster to stage protests against anything other than rising tuition rates, black enrollment declined steadily, says Thelma Price, and racial balance would remain a painful issue at Penn State. The nation—and the University—had undergone dramatic changes in the preceding twenty years, but low levels of black enrollment and staff would be a recurring problem for the University, and student demands for their increase would be repeated as often as a litany.

To be continued. Next: 1975-the present

The Dream Deferred

1975-1989, Years of Progress, Plight and Promise

by Lisa Roney

Editor's note: In the first two articles in our series on "The Black Experience at Penn State" (March/April and May/June Penn Staters), we described, in the context of national events, some of the experiences within Penn State's black community prior to 1975.

By the mid-seventies the air of protest was cooling across the country. The Vietnam War was ending. And while minority groups and women had effected many changes in the system and were waiting to see what their results would be, increasing social ills and a stagnating economy were frequently attributed to the gains of underrepresented people. Some citizens clamored for a return to the values of "easier times," while others were simply forced to fall back on a more survival-oriented mentality.

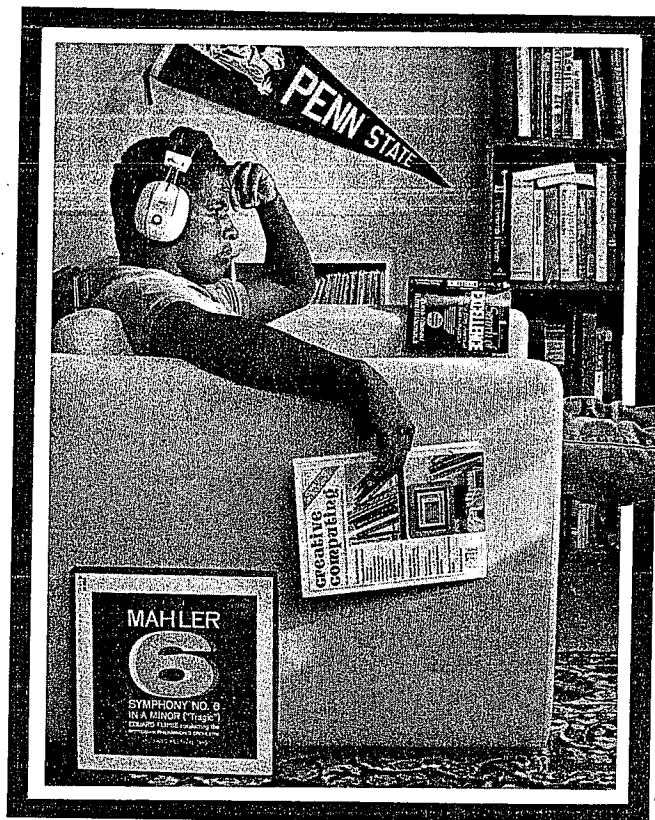
The late seventies and the eighties, discussed in this third article in the series, have brought both hope and despair to the cause of black America. In 1988 the high school completion rate for 20- to 24-year-old blacks was 81 percent compared to 56 percent in 1970, and there are now an estimated 800,000 black managers and executives. Most of the laws on the books clearly forbidding discrimination based on race have stood the test of time, but many note that the prejudice — underground for a time — has resurfaced in stubborn and sometimes subtle forms. With an uncertain stance from the nation's leadership, economic hard times, and distance from the history of blacks' struggles, overt racism has erupted once again, notably on college and university campuses across the country.

Statisticians had predicted that the end of the baby boom

and the subsequent overall decline in the numbers of high school graduates would open more educational opportunities to members of minority groups. But, according to the American Council on Education's 1988 status report, Minorities in Higher Education, the country has seen significant decreases in blacks' participation in academe since its peak in 1978. Although black enrollment at Penn State has

risen from 1.9 percent in 1974 to 3.7 percent of the student body in 1988, it has never reached the 5 percent goal set by University administrators, much less the 8 percent demanded by students in April of last year.

This is the dilemma with which we began to look back at the years of black participation in the Penn State experience, and it is, according to many, the foremost challenge



Scott Johnson

THE BLACK Experience

At Penn State

to American higher education today. This article contains differing (sometimes extremely) perspectives on and opinions about the problems we face. We attempt to serve as a conduit for ideas from those — students, administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers from the alumni body and community — who are struggling on a daily basis to open the doors of our society further. We hope these ideas will spark thought and discussion.

In the spring of 1975, Anita Thomas '79, then a senior at Philadelphia High School for Girls, was anticipating going to Boston University, where her brother was already a student. That year, however, Boston exploded over the issue of busing for the purpose of public school desegregation.

On June 21, 1974, a U.S. District Court had ruled that the city's public school system was deliberately segregated and ordered busing for integration. In September 35 percent of students boycotted the

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first day of classes, a high school was closed after a confrontation among hundreds of black and white students, and in October mobs of blacks and whites began attacking each other on the streets.

With racial violence raging, Anita Thomas' mother was afraid for her to go to Boston University, and Penn State was offering her financial assistance through the EOP (Educational Opportunity Program). So in the fall of 1975 she enrolled and came to University Park. The environment, although not violent, was far from welcoming.

At Penn State, as elsewhere in the seventies, raises in tuition had become the focus of what remained of a campus protest spirit. Financial concerns were a hallmark of the decade, with University Park's largest tuition demonstration occurring in May 1975. But the even harder-hit black students seldom joined their white counterparts on this issue. And campuses saw the beginnings of a "backlash," as many white students — like their parents — found affirmative action programs an easy scapegoat for economic difficulties.

"The EOP was labeled as being for 'dumb, poor' kids," recalls Anita Thomas. In other words, if you were EOP, "you really didn't belong at Penn State." In addition, she says, whites assumed that all blacks were EOP, never mind that EOP was just a freshman-year program.

Its one-year status became a bone of contention for EOP students, according to Thomas. "I was misled into thinking that it was a four-year scholarship that would be there as long as my academic performance was o.k.," she recalls. Thomas, a good student, was able to "scrape together" enough scholarship and work money to pay for her last three years.

But many others were not so lucky, she says. "A lot of students were surprised that EOP money ended after one year." With an unfriendly environment on top of financial difficulty for many black students, attrition rates were extremely high from 1974-80, running at 72 percent for blacks as opposed to 47 percent for whites after four years in the Penn State system.

Black enrollment had peaked at about 1,300 students, or 2.8 percent of a then rapidly growing student body, in 1972 and would not see those numbers again for nearly ten years. What students knew informally about attrition rates, administrators were beginning to take a hard look at.

President Gerald Ford ushered in not only a more conservative political climate, but an indecisive period for the nation's courts as well. He was the first president to publicly disagree with a desegregation order from the Supreme Court and repeatedly attacked busing as a means for integrating public schools.

Although the Supreme Court ruled that even private nonsectarian schools must not refuse admittance because of race, school desegregation plans and other civil-rights cases were dealt with unpredictably in the courts. Starting with a 1974 ruling about busing across school district lines, the Supreme Court itself ended twenty years of consistently ruling for the plaintiff in such cases. In 1977, the Court began to use the notion of discriminatory "intent," rather than simply discriminatory effect in desegregation cases.

Despite the fact that affirmative action's basic tenet — that past discrimination should be remedied by positive corrective measures — remained in force, such ideas were under attack. Many felt that the courts' uneven decisions on such cases and the negative stance of the nation's leadership were fanning the flames of resistance to desegregation and equal opportunity.

The challenge for Penn State is for the University to institutionalize the commitment expressed by Dr. Jordan, so that it's felt by every freshman, every M & O worker, and every tech services person, staff-exempt person, department chairman, dean, and faculty member.

Lawrence Young



An educational resource for the entire University community is what director Larry Young is working to make the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

At Penn State the environment for blacks remained problematic. The isolation black students and faculty members were experiencing, and the resulting instability of their numbers, didn't seem to be alleviated by the formation in the early seventies of a variety of groups and programs (EOP, the Black Scholars Program, the Black Cultural Center, the Forum on Black Affairs) or, in 1975, President John W. Oswald's appointment of a task force on increasing black enrollment.

Upon the advice of the task force, in 1975 Penn State's Ad-

missions Office adopted a policy of actively recruiting "regular admit" blacks in addition to those enrolled via Black Scholars and EOP. In the fall of 1976, recruitment centers were opened in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, using church, community and junior high-school contacts as well as the usual high-school visits to promote Penn State. The University was predicting an increase to four or five thousand black students by 1986.

Despite stepped-up recruiting efforts, students criticized University efforts as "shallow and ambiguous" and cited un-

derstaffed programs, poor financial aid packages, a lack of black role models in the form of faculty members, and an absence of cultural and social opportunities for black students once they enrolled. (*Daily Collegian*, Oct. 21, 1976)

"The racial climate was very tense, as I remember it," says Audrey Kharem '79, '86g. "Nobody offered anything to us at the time, and by my second year, most of the students I came up here with [in EOP] were gone. But I found a network of people that I've been able to grow with . . . we started our own church."

"The problem wasn't so much getting in as it was getting out with a degree," recalls Pamela Blake Welmon '75, '82g, '86g. "Staying here was the problem. [Black] people have never felt that they were a part or they belonged or that anybody cared that they succeeded. It was a total isolation kind of feeling, every time you went anywhere — to the grocery store, to the department store, to classes."

As there were few like Thelma Price, then assistant vice president for student affairs, who took on roles as personal student advocates, it was necessary for black students to seek out others for assistance and companionship, according to Anita Thomas. "I wasn't afraid to extend myself to people," she says, remembering involvement with individuals like Professor Cyril Griffith in the black studies program and others in Black Caucus and on the Race Relations Board.

Sometimes it was harder for people to find the support they needed. Says Madelyne Pressley '80, '83g, "I came in through the Black Scholars Program, and it was thought that I didn't need any help. Basically, I was out there floundering around with no guidance. The difference for me was that I had family support," she continues. "I remember calling them, crying, from that phone booth in the hall, telling them I was flunking, and them saying, 'Just do the best you can.'"

Whether it was family like



The friendship of Todd Blackledge '83 and Curt Warner '83 inspired the annual Ebony & Ivory event, bringing black and white together.

When I look back at Penn State, I want to remember some fun times too and not all negative things. There are worse places to be than Penn State, places where the administration doesn't work on the problem at all. But every day is an uphill struggle.

Jennifer Demby

Madelyne Pressley's or friends based on campus interests like Anita Thomas' or a religious community like Audrey Kharem's, most black students who overcame the high attrition rates and graduated from Penn State did so by finding some sustaining base from which to operate. "You had to have a determination that you were going to make it," says Kharem.

In spite of this dissatisfaction with the environment, the late seventies were quiet years, and protest moves never gathered much momen-

tum as students seemed to accept, in general, the University's efforts. At Oswald's annual "Tune-In" talk session sponsored by the Alumni Association in 1975, the president of the Black Caucus made a plea for the University to create a vice presidency to handle minority student problems, but the response was that adequate channels already existed and that it was just a matter of using them.

In 1978 Penn State witnessed its first protest against the University for having financial investments in compa-

nies doing business in South Africa. When the Board of Trustees voted to adopt a policy of encouraging change in South Africa by endorsing the Sullivan Principles of non-segregation and equality of opportunity, Charles Kennedy '79, president of the Black Caucus, expressed cautious satisfaction, as well as his hope that the University would ultimately divest from South Africa. (*Daily Collegian*, Jan. 24, 1979) Less than a decade later this would have become a bitter issue for many Penn Staters, black and white.

In 1980 voters put in place a conservative Republican Congress and elected Ronald Reagan as their next president. With a reduced federal deficit as a major goal and with priorities for spending shifted to defense and other programs, the Reagan administration and a cooperative Congress targeted social programs for drastic cuts. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, food stamps, CETA job-training, housing subsidies and federal college loans and scholarships were all reduced.

Laws and court rulings, too, began to reflect a more conservative stance toward civil rights, as in 1981 the House of Representatives voted to bar the Justice Department from pursuing any desegregation cases that might result in a busing order. The administration and the Justice Department also advocated tax-exempt status for private schools that discriminated based on race, although the Supreme Court ruled against it in 1983. By the end of that year the disparity in income between black and white had risen to its 1960 level.

By September of 1982, thirty-three state advisers to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission had released a statement claiming that Reagan was in charge of a "dangerous deterioration in federal enforcement of civil rights." The administration countered that Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Program had proved "tragic" for blacks by putting them on a

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permanent dole, effacing their self-esteem and angering whites. Throughout his two terms in office, Reagan continued to be a spokesman against affirmative action programs.

Concern over low numbers of minority students at Penn State was growing during the early eighties, as the programs put in place by the Oswald administration failed to reap the expected results. The media repeatedly criticized Penn State, and members of the Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council visited the University a number of times and expressed dissatisfaction with the progress it was making in black enrollment.

In 1983 U.S. District Judge John Pratt handed down a court order requiring the Office of Civil Rights to enforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by withdrawing federal funds from states that did not comply. Named after the original class-action suit that led to the order, the fourteen "Adams states," including Pennsylvania, received the federal mandate to develop plans for desegregating their systems of higher education. Penn State administrators, including newly appointed President Bryce Jordan, worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to develop a five-year plan in which the University specified a goal of increasing black enrollment from where it stood at 2.8 percent of the student body to 5 percent by 1988.

During the winter of 1984, seven months into his tenure as president, Jordan announced a series of new initiatives to improve Penn State's recruitment and retention of black students. Seven hundred thousand dollars in extra funds were earmarked for the purpose. Stepped-up efforts were to include:

- Giving the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia community

centers admissions authority and linking them by computer to the University's admissions and financial aid offices.

- An Early Assurance Program allowing black high school students to gain quicker results on admission, financial aid and housing.

- Guaranteed Financial Aid to in-state students demonstrating need and maintaining normal progress, including a

package of grants and/or loans to follow EOP grants for the remaining undergraduate years.

- Tutoring and counseling services through the Academic Assistance Program.

- Cooperative programs with the state's traditionally black institutions, Cheney and Lincoln universities.

- The use of black alumni as recruiters.

- A "Buddy System," conceived by the Forum on Black Affairs, pairing incoming black students with black faculty members for guidance and support.

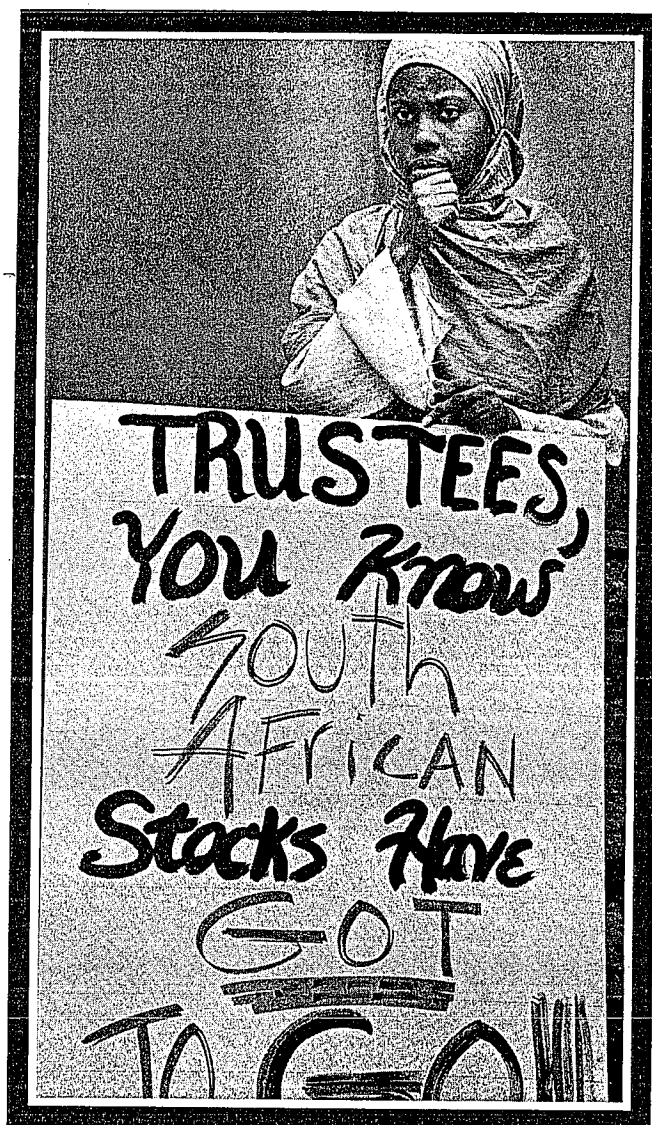
- Promotion of black administrator William Asbury from affirmative action officer to executive assistant to the president and chairman of the Equal Opportunity Planning Committee, to address student and faculty recruitment issues.

Thelma Price was appointed assistant vice president for academic services and went to Harrisburg to concentrate on recruitment there, and Cynthia L. King was given the responsibility of coordinating the minority recruitment efforts in the Office of Admissions. In addition, more funds were slated for recruiting black faculty. (New Pittsburgh Courier, 1984)

In 1983 Larry Young was hired as the new director of the renamed Paul Robeson Cultural Center (formerly Walnut Building). He worked to erase the "Club Walnetto" hangout image of previous years and to make it an educational resource for students and faculty, black and white, furthering cross-cultural understanding as well as providing a source of affirmation for black students.

"I've insisted that the proper name for the Center be used," Young says, "because to call it anything else is to disrespect its mission and the memory of the person it was named for." Young also has redirected programming at the Center from purely social events to primarily academic and educational ones and has expanded its library. The Paul Robeson Cultural Center participates in and sponsors a number of events, lectures and speakers on a regular basis, as well as on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and during Black History Month and Penn State's Black Arts Festival.

The annual Ebony & Ivory Week, initiated in 1984 and sponsored by the traditionally white Beta Sigma Beta and the traditionally black Alpha Phi Alpha fraternities, is a tension-reducing event inspired by the friendship of Todd Blackledge



Divestment of University holdings in South Africa was a hotly debated issue from 1985-87.

The University needs to stop being afraid of the so-called radicals. We always need to be challenged and stretched.

Anita Thomas '79

The crux of the problem is that minorities in this country are underrepresented in higher education. Penn State has an obligation to try to help correct that, and we are working to get that done. We are in it for the long haul.

Bryce Jordan

'83 and Curt Warner '83, roommates and football teammates. Ebony & Ivory Week sponsors speakers and seminars focusing on race relations.

Although their numbers were once again, if slowly, on the rise, the lack of a "critical mass" of blacks on campus remained a fact of life for black students during the early and mid-eighties, and remains so today. "You make a choice to stay with minorities and participate in predominantly minority events and programs," says Allwyn Baskin '84, now a graduate student in the College of Business Administration, "or you make an active choice to integrate yourself."

As an undergraduate, Baskin did more of the latter, becoming the first black member of a formerly all-white fraternity, Theta Delta Chi, working with Alpha Tau Omega service fraternity, participating in Parmi Nous and becoming Penn State's first black competitive ice skater. Although at the time, he says, he was more aware that he and his Philippino partner were the first pair than that he was the first black on the skating team, his many activities "became outlets for frustration and loneliness," some of which was attributable to being black.

"You can't help but notice that you're very much in the minority," he says. "If you just saw another black person in the dining hall or one of your classes, you would notice it."

"There were so few black

students," at University Park, concurs Eric Johnson '86, "that I felt if I stayed only in that crowd I'd be limited." Johnson, outgoing and friendly, became a cheerleader and a Lion Ambassador and was on the wrestling team. "I was an Army brat," he explains, "and I was used to adapting to less than ideal circumstances. University Park was a little more isolated than even I was used to, but I tried not to let that affect me."

An increasingly global perspective on human rights in the eighties led Americans to another cause for which many white and black citizens have pulled together: blacks living under extreme conditions and protesting their government's system of apartheid in the white minority-ruled nation of South Africa. In June 1985 Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr., was arrested for protesting outside the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. That September, in response to heightening public opinion, President Reagan imposed economic sanctions against South Africa, and within a few months several other Western nations had done the same.

The debate about whether or not colleges and universities should divest their holdings in companies doing business in South Africa had been raging on campuses across the country for several years. Many held that it was immoral for U.S. companies to

cooperate with the South African government and to benefit from its unfair labor laws. Others countered that breaking off trade would only hurt the impoverished black South Africans more.

In April 1985 Penn State joined the list of institutions in the nation where students were demonstrating against apartheid and for divestment, but in May and again in July the Board of Trustees voted to continue its investments in companies doing business in South Africa, encouraging those companies to adopt the Sullivan Principles. In a report, President Jordan cited "opportunity to support positive change for nonwhites in South Africa" and the "significant legal risk to the Board of Trustees in their fiduciary capacity" should it choose to divest.

During the next two years, disagreement over the subject intensified. Student groups — the Committee for Justice in South Africa, Black Caucus, Black Student Union, Undergraduate Student Government, Graduate Student Association and others — banded together for protest rallies, the building of a mock shantytown near Old Main, a march to Harrisburg to lobby legislators to apply pressure to the Board, and boycotts of minority recruitment efforts. In October 1986 they were joined by a group of Black Alumni Advocating Divestment (BAAD), who proposed to discourage blacks from attending Penn State and to lobby in the legislature.

"I had a class — History 191 — at the time," recalls Seth Williams '89, who arrived at



Role models, and opportunities to interact with them, provide students with support and incentive.

We need to stop looking only at the president for his commitment and start looking at the people right next to us, at each other. Each one of us has to make that commitment.

Ann Shields '78

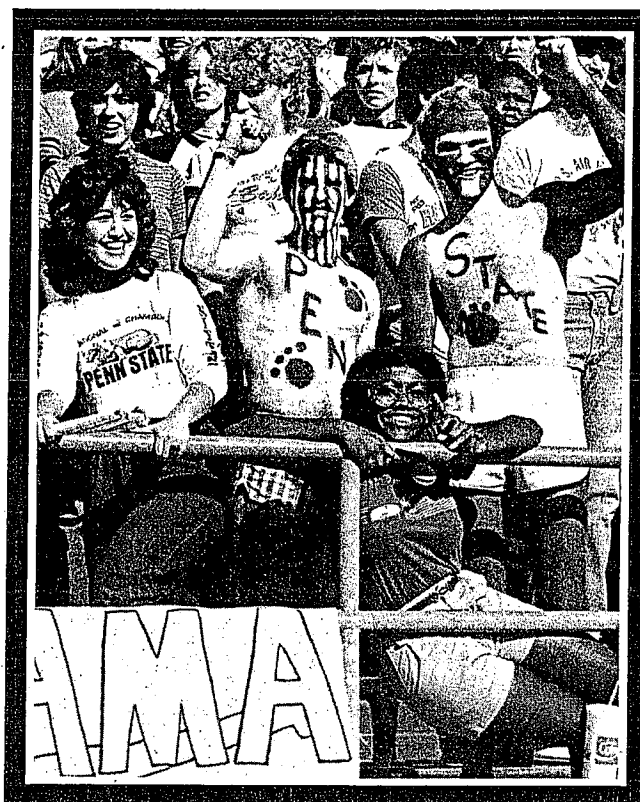
THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

University Park from Ogontz in the fall of 1986, "and we were learning all about the colonization of Africa. I began to realize that as I was here learning that that [colonization] was wrong, it was still going on in the form of apartheid and that Penn State, by having investments there, was basically supporting the South African government. That didn't seem to fit." Williams, as chairman of the Black Caucus political services committee and a member of the USG Senate, was a "joiner" and soon became one of the most outspoken of the students — black and white — supporting divestment at rallies usually sponsored by the Committee for Justice in South Africa.

During 1986 and the first half of 1987, the Board of Trustees had approved the implementation of SHARE, a program designed to bring nonwhite South African students to the University for study; had voted to divest from three companies that were not complying fully with the Sullivan principles; and had rejected, after hours of debate, a proposal that would have prohibited new investments in companies doing business there.

Many black South Africans like the Reverend Desmond Tutu, had been urging divestment for some time, and in June 1987, the Reverend Leon Sullivan, author of the guidelines that were so often used for companies operating in South Africa, announced that they had failed to bring enough change and called on American business to pull out. The following month Pennsylvania governor Robert Casey urged the University to divest, and Penn State's protest momentum showed no signs of dwindling.

That fall, in an unexpected move, the Board voted 20-1 to divest all holdings in South



Only a few black faces in a sea of white. Many find it overwhelming.

It's very difficult to have the students publicly characterize this place as hell on earth for minorities and on the other hand expect an increase in the number of black students, faculty and staff who want to come here.

Roger Williams '73, '75g, '88g

Africa-involved companies and to continue the SHARE program as a means of continuing to express opposition to apartheid and promote positive change. Trustee chairman Obie Snider '50, in his speech to the Board, said that in light of the fact that divestment no longer posed serious financial risks, "it is time to put this divisive issue behind us."

The issue had indeed become divisive, and impacted negatively on the new recruiting efforts that had been

begun after Jordan became president of the University in 1983. New efforts had brought black enrollment from 2.5 percent in 1983 to 3.7 percent in 1985, but the next two years saw a leveling off in the numbers of blacks on Penn State campuses. Several reasons were cited, including stepped-up efforts by other colleges and universities to bolster their own minority enrollments, as well as the effect of the divestment issue.

Jeff Ballou '90 worked with

admissions to recruit black students his first two years at McKeesport and has continued to do so at University Park. He recalls, "For a while I was just 'Rah! rah! Penn State,' but that began slowly fading. I was particularly challenged to reconsider recruiting." Ballou didn't give up trying to get blacks to Penn State but, he says, he changed some of the content of what he was telling prospects. "We must be intricately involved in recruiting," he says now, "and we should tell students exactly what's going on."

"The prevailing mood was 'Get out of South Africa,'" says Anita Thomas, one of the organizers of BAAD, "and when the University fought that, it enraged people in the black community. There may have been those on the Board who really felt that it was better for blacks in South Africa to keep holdings there, but it sent a bad message to blacks here, including those the University was trying to recruit. It still makes me angry."

In the fall of 1987, for the fifth consecutive year under the plan adopted in response to Pennsylvania's desegregation mandate, Penn State failed to meet its own goals for black enrollment. Actual numbers of black students increased, but due to a larger student body overall, their percentage fell to 3.6 from 1986's 3.7, 1.4 percent short of its mark. The small possibility that the University might ultimately lose federal funding reared its head only briefly, however, as the case providing the basis for the order was dismissed by Judge Pratt on December 11.

Although President Jordan announced that Penn State would continue to pursue the enrollment goals and "to be committed firmly to vigorous affirmative action goals designed to achieve equal opportunity for all citizens," some students and others remained skeptical of the University's efforts. In April 1988 this dissatisfaction set off a series of demonstrations that culminated in the arrest of

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eighty-nine students, seventy-eight black and eleven white.

On Tuesday, April 6, nine students, with about fifty supporters eventually gathering outside, requested a meeting with President Jordan, who was out of town, and held a sit-in in his office until other administrators agreed to schedule the meeting for Friday, April 8. The meeting, scheduled for the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, failed to materialize when disagreement arose about whether it would be open to the public, as the students wished, or limited to the original nine protestors, as agreed to by the administration. More than 150 students who had gathered at the Center for the meeting marched to the nearby Telecommunications Building and occupied it for fifteen hours. Students and administrators sent to negotiate for another meeting failed to reach an agreement, and in the early morning hours of April 9, police were called in to arrest those students who refused to leave.

Although the President expressed his continuing desire to "discuss their concerns under mutually agreeable conditions" and held that the University had acted in the interests of safety, many students interpreted his actions as an unwillingness to talk.

"It's a terrible message to students when the president of the University would rather send state troopers to meet with them than come himself," said Seth Williams, then newly elected as president of the USG.

"It is amazing to me that Dr. Jordan would not just walk across campus and talk," says Jennifer Demby '91, one of the students arrested and then vice president of the Black Caucus. "There was no need to call in state troopers. It

wasn't like we were rioting — half of us were asleep when they came in."

The following week a meeting — open to the public for observation but limiting participation to a central group — was scheduled. During the meeting, President Jordan dropped the charges against the arrested protestors, who presented a list of demands that included increases in black students and faculty to 8 percent — close to the proportion of the state's population that is black. The total then stood at 3.6 percent for students and just under 2 percent for faculty.

The students also asked for a vice president of Pan-African affairs; a new building for the Paul Robeson Cultural Center; upgrading of the black studies program to a full department and policies requiring students to take black or women's-studies courses; an outside group to analyze the racial climate; and continued access to information about and input into decisions con-

cerning the minority community. In addition, the group, calling themselves Concerned African Americans at Penn State, expressed dissatisfaction with the term "black," and requested that the University change all references to members of their race, calling them "African American."

After the meeting, administrators and students both expressed cautious optimism, but by fall semester, students were impatient and reported disillusionment with the process, saying that responses were taking too long and that many were not adequate. A confrontational mood persisted, with USG president Seth Williams at the forefront of new issues such as a completely open University budget.

By the beginning of this year a number of racial incidents, mostly between white and black students, were reported at Penn State and other campuses across the country — racial

slurs in the forms of graffiti, posters and comments; physical attacks and threats. All were contributing to fears and tensions.

When five black women reported being accosted by ten white men in State College early one Sunday morning in February, and racially derogatory flyers aimed at Seth Williams were found on campus the following week, students gathered in a series of protest marches. This time meetings with administrators went more smoothly as the University community attempted to rally behind the more straightforward issues of personal safety and freedom from outright harassment.

"We're trying to let the African American community know that people in the community care," said Bill Mahon, public information director. President Jordan came out in favor of these symbolic protests and within weeks the University had begun a campaign of "United Against Racism" lapel buttons and posters, newspaper ads, and radio spots condemning "acts of intolerance." Concern among the student body surged, and a new multi-racial group called Students Against Racism held a public rally and meetings.

"What I saw this year," says Bill Richardson, executive vice president and provost, "was a tremendous evolution: from actions last year that were both outside the University code of conduct and outside the law, to a situation this year where we have a much greater sensitivity and awareness — by the African-American students, the black community more generally, the administration and the rest of the University community — on how best to get at the remaining issues of climate. I was very pleased to see that."

By springtime the University was reporting substantial progress on minority concerns in general and on the demands of Concerned African Americans at Penn State in particular, with the search under way for a new vice provost for equal opportunity; funding for a new Paul



Students at a 1988 sit-in listen as police read an injunction forbidding interference in normal passage to and from the building.

Daily Collegian/Jody Stecher

We want to improve the quality of life and education at Penn State. We're not trying to destroy Penn State. We want to make it better.

Seth Williams '89

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At Penn State

Robeson Cultural Center on the capital budget request; a budget available to the public; increases in black faculty and staff; small increases made in Black Incentive Grants and Black Achievement Awards; two visits by a team of social scientists looking at ways to improve the environment; a "diversity requirement" under consideration by the Faculty Senate; and the development of full-department status for black studies, as well as the formation of a new Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity. But the specifics and effectiveness of those responses were questioned by some students who held anniversary demonstrations in April.

"This University, on paper, looks like it makes a lot of good efforts," says Jeff Ballou, "but there is an inherent problem when people will be satisfied with the status quo." The bottom line, he emphasizes, is not how many programs are in place or how many dollars are spent or even enrollment figures, but how many black students are sticking it out to graduation. "I'm not satisfied with efforts," he says. "I will be satisfied with success."

Kendall Houk '89, a white student who was influenced to activism by his friendship with Seth Williams, observes, "Some of the demands are unrealistic from the standpoint of the power structure we have today, but people should be questioning whether the power structure in place now is the best thing for society. There are a lot of institutional barriers, and it's not enough to just acknowledge that African Americans are a legal part of society."

"It's going to take a lot to convince the black community that the University is making a true effort," agrees B. J. Wilson '90. "We have to go to such extremes to have them

do something," asserts Jennifer Demby, "that we just don't trust them with their power and authority."

The students "are looking for a literal response to their demands," says Roger Williams '73, '75g, '88g, assistant vice president and executive director of University relations. "They want it to happen overnight — that's the difference between the world of the young and the world of adulthood. Things just don't

happen that quickly. A collegial organization such as a university requires that many people and groups be brought into the decision-making process — and that takes time."

Although most faculty and staffers who were asked speak highly of the administration's initiatives and note that "there will always be conflict between the administrators and the students on the basis of the roles they have to play," some adults agree that

things are moving too slowly. Says Harold Cheatham '61, associate professor of education, "I have become dissipated because of what I perceive to be only halting progress toward the ideal."

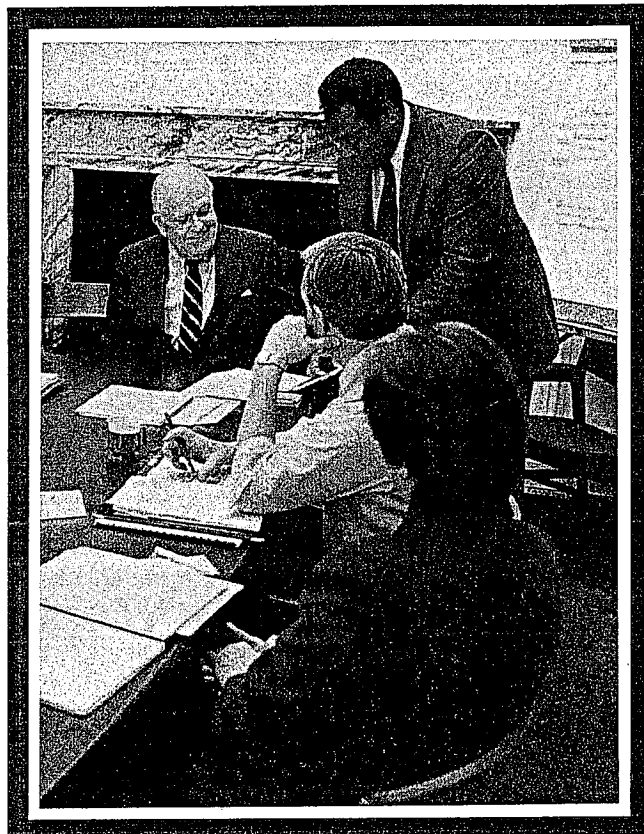
Still, "no one has a blueprint on how to solve this particular problem," points out Bill Asbury, vice president for student services and once the only black executive administrator at Penn State. "If we did, that's what we'd be doing. To the best of our knowledge and our ability, we are doing as much as we can, but that doesn't mean that we're doing enough to satisfy the ultimate goals of the minority."

"There aren't any easy answers to most of the questions that are being asked, and there is no pat formula," agrees James Stewart, professor and director of the black studies program, "but I tend to want to act more decisively because I have a better understanding than some [people] of what is going on and am willing to go out on a limb and use my intuition."

"I think that the real needs and desires of the students are perhaps not what are in those demands anyway," says Suzanne Brooks, head of Penn State's Affirmative Action Office. "What they really want is affirmation, encouragement, support, recognition, opportunities for achievement, upward mobility, hope and elimination of despair, credit for what they do, and those kinds of things. The issue is that we still have discrimination. We have to look at the demands as symptomatic of something much deeper. If we're only acting on those demands, we're missing the real point."

Ann Shields '78 agrees. "I hope that while some people might be upset with the particular demands," she says, "they do not lose sight overall that we do have race-relation problems that do need solving."

In 1989 in State College, a black professor working in the yard of his \$100,000 home was assumed to be a hired gardener. A slender black graduate student cool-



One of few black top administrators, William Asbury, meets with the president and other members of the central management group.

Do people know that at Hershey we have more full-time black faculty than at almost any other medical school or that my first-year med school class was over ten percent minority?

Eric Johnson '86

ing down after his morning jog was asked by a child, "Are you a football player?" And a white student blithely asked a black undergraduate if Malcolm X, depicted on a lapel button, was a rap musician. These are the slights that add to the incidence of verbal and physical abuse and professional discrimination to make "Happy Valley" a less pleasant place than it might be for blacks to live and study.

Similar environments prevail at many of the Commonwealth Campuses. B. J. Wilson, for example, spent his freshman year at Altoona, where, he says, he was "like a white person in a black person's skin. I never had a date with a black girl until I came to University Park, and my best friend at Altoona was white." Still, though, there were racial incidents that reminded him he wasn't totally accepted, including an episode where he and two other blacks were attacked at a fraternity party for dancing with white girls. Having found some encouragement from members of University Park's black community, Wilson has been exploring his heritage as an African American, but, he says, "they really don't want African-American culture here."

Adults, like Don Sheffield '89g, whose family has remained in Pittsburgh while he has studied and worked here the past few years, feel the lack of a black community in town. Many, however, "who have moved into academics have taken up some of the trappings of the middle class and it is easier to relate to some elements in the community, like the quality of housing and schools," says Professor Stewart. Additionally, he says, faculty and staff members have more opportunities to travel, to shop, eat, visit and "recharge the batteries" in other cities.

Many black adults in the community also stay busy and give meaning to their activities in groups such as the Equal Opportunity Planning Committee and Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity. "There are so few of us that we are

Many alumni, students, faculty, staff and administrators contributed their time and thoughts to the making of this article. Although some of them are not directly quoted, every single one offered valuable perspectives that we hope the article reflects. Following is a list of those interviewed.

Students and Alumni

Anita Thomas '79 (community development with black studies minor) is now staff manager for the market development education group in AT&T's consumer marketing division and lives in Plainfield, New Jersey.

Allwyn Baskin '84 (marketing) is now working on his master's degree in the College of Business Administration.

Eric Johnson '86 (general arts and sciences) is studying for his M.D. degree at Hershey Medical School.

Noelle Blockson '87 (general arts and sciences) is an office administrator for Novell, Inc., a computer software company in the Philadelphia area. She is the daughter of Charles Blockson '56.

Kim Beverly '89 (broadcast journalism) plans to graduate in December.

Kendall Houk '89 (math) has been active in student government. He is thinking about going on to graduate school.

Seth Williams '89 (political science with a black studies minor) was 1988-89 USG president. He plans to enter Georgetown University School of Law in the fall. His father, **Rufus Williams '48**, was interviewed for the first article in the series.

Janyne Althaus '90 (general arts and sciences) is the incoming president of the USG.

Jeff Ballou '90 (journalism with a minor in black studies) was an Ogontz ambassador, was president of radio station WPSU 1987-88, was on the 1989 IFC Dance Marathon steering committee and works in Minority Admissions and Community Affairs. He plans to study law with an emphasis on civil rights and/or communications policy.

very busy serving on panels related to creating diversity at Penn State," says one. Ann Shields, now coordinator of alumni affairs and special programs for the College of Arts and Architecture, helped found Penn State's Women of

B. J. Wilson '90 (public service) has been on the cycling team and is assistant vice president of the Minority Law Students Association and secretary of the Black Caucus. He plans to become a civil rights attorney.

Jennifer Demby '91 (secondary education) was 1988-89 vice president of Black Caucus, helped to found Ebony Escorts and has been elected president of the Student Hearing Board for next year. She is looking forward to a career teaching social sciences.

Nina Fachin '92 (a freshman in the Honors Program) is on the advisory board for Students Against Racism.

Faculty, Staff and Administrators

Robert Kidder '61 (business administration) is director of the Office of Employment and Procedures.

Carol Herrmann '70g (journalism) is vice president for administration.

Roger Williams '73, '75g, '88g (history, journalism and higher education) is assistant vice president and executive director of University Relations.

Pamela Blake Welmon '75, '82g, '86g, (vocational industrial education) is senior project associate for the Office of Undergraduate Programs and has chaired the Women of Color community outreach committee.

Audrey Kharem '78, '86g, (counselor education) works with students through the Academic Assistance Programs.

Ann Shields '78 (speech communication) was a Renaissance Fund Scholar. She is coordinator of alumni affairs and special programs for the College of Arts and Architecture and is pursuing a master's degree. A founding member of Women of Color, she is on the Commission on Ethnic/Racial Diversity and the search committee for the vice provost for equal opportunity.

Madelyne Pressley '80, '83g (counselor education) is working on her doctorate. She has been with Academic Assistance Programs since 1986.

Don Sheffield '89g, (higher education administration) will defend his dissertation this summer and plans to receive his doctorate in August. He is director of the Academic Support Center and has been studying the academic performance of student athletes.

William Asbury, for many years the University's only black executive officer, is vice president for Student Services.

Suzanne Brooks is head of the Affirmative Action Office and an active member of Women of Color.

Arlene Cheatham has been a counselor for Academic Assistance Programs for five years and is active in community outreach efforts.

Robert Dunham, currently acting as the contact person for black students with the central administration, is vice president for Academic Services and a professor of speech communication.

Bryce Jordan has been Penn State's president since 1983.

Gary Kelsey is director of Minority Admissions and Community Affairs.

Marc Levey is coordinator of counseling and assistant to the dean of Academic Assistance Programs. He is a founding member of the AAP Council, a town-gown organization that focuses on community relations and education.

James Stewart is director of the black studies program, associate professor of labor and industrial relations and chairs the Equal Opportunity Planning Committee.

William Richardson is executive vice president and provost of the University.

Lawrence Young is in his seventh year as director of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

Color (there is also a Men of Color group) to "reach across cultures to all women who are in that double-jeopardy bind. I have found," she says, "a way to at least tackle two major concerns of my life."

Cultural differences in the

community are particularly hard on black students, who cite the continued lack of black hairdressers; such black-oriented products as curl relaxer, make-up, panty hose and magazines; and, most of all, a radio station that plays

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE AT PENN STATE

black music more than a few hours a week. "It's not that you die without those things," says B. J. Wilson, "but you tend to lose your sense of self, your identity, everything that you're about."

There are many at Penn State who work to alleviate these subtler pressures on black students in order to improve their experiences and aid retention as well as recruitment. Each academic college now has a minority coordinator charged with working out programs and problems specific to their units. The Paul Robeson Cultural Center, the black studies program and several student organizations and academic units co-sponsor and offer programs to enhance the lives of students by giving them an appreciation for African-influenced culture and affirming its importance. Counselors in a variety of offices work on a daily basis to help students through difficult personal and academic times.

Audrey Kharem and Madelyne Pressley both now work as counselors in the Academic Assistance Programs office, a place, they say, where any student can bring any kind of problem and get help.

"They're coming here to get an education," says Kharem, "but there's so much more to it than that, things that help people develop as individuals. That's hard here."

Arlene Cheatham also works with AAP and does a lot of work in community outreach, trying to get local businesses to respond to the needs of the black community. "The stores, for the most part, have been very responsive," she says, speaking of her work with local drug and grocery stores, some of which now stock black greeting cards, panty hose, make-up and food products, as well as foods for a variety of other ethnic groups. "Still," she notes, "because they stock

very small amounts, the prices are often inflated."

Don Sheffield, who has worked with athletic advising while pursuing his doctorate in higher education administration, says that academic problems for athletes are exacerbated when they are black. "I think freshman participation in sports is a real threat to higher education," he says, describing studies he is currently conducting about the relative performance of student athletes. "They need to learn how to handle the environment academically and socially before we throw them out on the field to play. And these problems are just worse

for black students, who have bigger adjustments to make to begin with." Penn State, he adds, has tried to "do things the right way" by at least providing a good academic counseling program.

Students, of course, develop a variety of attitudes when faced with these sorts of things. Most, however, agree that the majority population needs to learn more about blacks and their history and culture. "I never knew that Cleopatra was black," says Kim Beverly '89, "because we aren't taught those things in school. People need to see that other cultures have participated in making America

what it is today, because once you see that, you can learn to see others in a different light."

"Whites always assume things," says Jennifer Demby, "like in class, if anything comes up about inner-city problems, they look right at you. I have to tell them I'm from the suburbs. I know there are times when I should take the time to educate, but I am tired of doing it. They make no effort to change their own exposure."

Others try to take it with a grain of salt. "I try to keep in mind the real difference between ignorance based on lack of exposure and prejudice based on hatred," says Eric Johnson. "My [white] roommate and I used to laugh because I'd tell him that he was lucky to have gotten me. Any other black student would have killed him. He said some really stupid things at the beginning."

In general students, staff, faculty and administrators agree that some more education for the majority students is needed, but discussion is ongoing about what form it should take: noncredit workshops (required or not), a class specifically designed to address cultural diversity or requiring that students take a course with a non-European gist. Currently the University encourages, but does not require the latter.

"Advising has become one of the key elements the University has recognized in retention, but that's not the only thing," says Ann Shields. "The attitudes, the treatment of the student in the classroom, and the involvement of students at various levels of the organization in various types of activities, these things are also important."



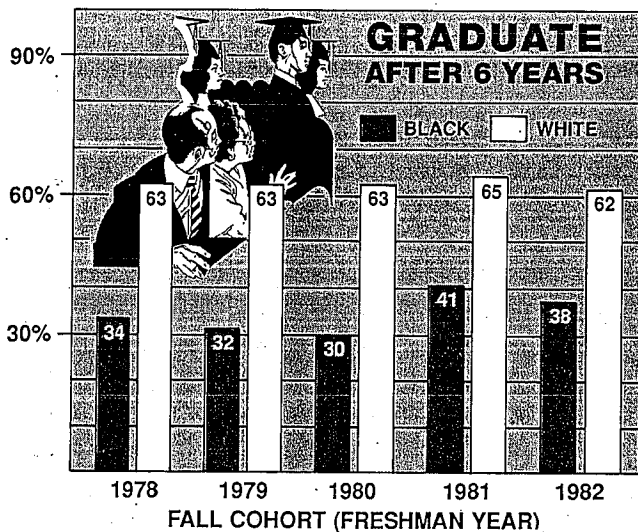
Scott Johnson

The greatest challenge to black students today is making it to graduation.

As long as we do things in a Band-Aid way that doesn't fundamentally retrain the mass of students who come through here, then we are really not meeting our responsibilities as an institution of higher education looking toward the 21st Century.

James Stewart

The American Council on Education, in conjunction with the Education Commission of the States, in 1988 published the results of an "extensive examination" of the subject of minority participation in higher education in the report, *One-Third of a Nation*. Their conclusion was not a happy one. With a continuing and



Discrepancy between black and white graduation rates is still high.

substantial rise in the percentage of the population and work force comprised of minority individuals, they found that "America is moving backward — not forward — in its efforts to achieve the full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation," and called on educators to help "open the doors of the American dream to all our citizens."

Professor James Stewart sums up the importance of the issue this way: "There are three ways you can look at it. One is that it is our moral responsibility to provide opportunity for everyone. Another is that with our changing demographics in order for this country to remain competitive in the 21st Century we will have to pull everyone in and make them useful. Yet another perspective is that the basic skills that one needs to function in society have changed to include learning to interact with culturally different people, as much as literacy." The student movement, he notes, has given more impetus to needed changes.

"It's difficult to fight images of students protesting," says Roger Williams, "but I think if you look at the facts Penn State is doing very well." Indeed, the University has continued to add initiatives, many of them suggested by students, such as a school district partnership to encourage minority junior high school stu-

dents and their parents to think about and get ready for college, a racial concerns hotline and newsletter for anxious parents, promotional campaigns in magazines like *Ebony* and *Essence*, and a host of other programs.

"We're in this for the long haul," says President Jordan. "There's nothing to do but keep chipping away at the problem."

Many students, faculty and alumni acknowledge substantive progress in the past six years. "It's necessary if you feel real discontent to let it be known in a peaceful way, and obviously it's gotten results," says Kim Beverly. "I think that the administration is doing a good job as far as responding. This has built through centuries, and you can't get rid of it overnight."

Things have been moving in the right direction under President Jordan's leadership, according to Jesse Arnette '55, long-term member of the Board of Trustees and its first black. "If we'd had Bryce ten or fifteen years ago, we wouldn't be having these kinds of problems now," he says.

But for many students and alumni, skepticism is the rule. "It's no longer an issue of trust," says Jeff Ballou, "because too much 'benign' neglect has taken place."

Black Penn State students have many goals and experiences parallel to those of their

nonblack counterparts — they attend class and have professors they like and those they dread; they eat Creamery ice cream, go to parties, and fall in love; they struggle to grasp new ideas and form identities. So much has been so since the first black enrolled at Penn State in 1900.

But the odds they face for reaching graduation day are indeed intimidating. Most who have made it express positive feelings about the benefits of the education they've received, and many, outright love for their alma mater. Most say they would do it all again. Most understand the complexity of the situation facing ad-

ministrators, faculty and staff. But most of all, they want more of those who follow to make it to graduation day. In addition, they hope for more cross-cultural understanding and acceptance.

"This can be a pluralistic society with many cultures and many people living in peace and harmony," says B. J. Wilson optimistically. "That was one of the biggest principles America was founded on. Education about and acceptance of others' cultures is where that all begins."

As Jeff Ballou reminds us, "Nobody said it was going to be easy."

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