or 135 Years:

SILENCE: the price of diversity

r Gregory Kannerstein '63*

or 135 years the price of diversity at Haverford was silence; the cost of at silence cannot be reckoned even by ose who bore it—and that includes just out everyone who has been connected th the institution.

It is a cost which can be entered on e historical ledger only in invisible ink, cost of words unuttered, thoughts thought, and, worst of all, a cost of ople not here, never to have been here.

But Haverford has been a pretty good ace for most of us who *have* been here, d it's certainly a place where an individ- l has been encouraged to be himself, ough rarely herself. It's a place where a emingly staggering variety of interests, ents, and experiences have been con- ned in a small number of people, where orthodox opinions have been tolerated d sometimes encouraged, and where e distinctions of race, religion, and cio-economic condition, so important utside," have been blurred and often gotten.

Why, then, was the college recently der attack from its own students, ulty, and administration for lacking ersity, for being inhospitable to what ersity exists, and for being unable, spite expressed intentions, to insure ure (and wider) diversity? More to the int, why did this issue arouse such ong feelings in February and March, 72, that Haverford went through six eks of tension, came close to crisis, and s compelled to examine not only its ocedures, but its goals and very reasons existence?

And why did fewer than 60 black and Puerto Rican students emerge as the only cohesive group on campus, the only group that could define issues, initiate action, and keep from being paralyzed by individual differences?

The answers are hard to discern, but their shape is visible in the mirror the Black Students' League and the Puerto Rican Students at Haverford—and some women and some poor white students—held up to the college at the end of last winter.

MULBERRY STREET. If we look hard enough, we can see that shape emerging as long ago as "Sixth Day the 18th inst. [June] 1830 at three o'clock in the afternoon" at the Mulberry Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, where those interested in the establishment of an institution for teaching Friends' children "the higher branches of learning" gathered.

Rufus Jones tells us that the college which evolved from that meeting was to provide a "guarded education" and that it took "almost a century to establish the principle that 'guarded education' is not in any true sense education." While it's easy to appreciate the motives that guided those pioneers in Quaker higher education, it's not as easy to understand the restrictions the college functioned under even after the idea of a sheltered education solely for the sons of Friends was no longer paramount.

The process of diversification began at least as early as 1848 when non-Friends were admitted as students after the college had been closed for three years. Indeed, such diversification was a matter of survival then—as it might prove to be today—since, in Rufus Jones' words, "it was the stern, cold fact that financial failure threatened to defeat the sectarian experiment. If the experiment was to go on at all, it had to be on broader lines."

The lines did broaden gradually, and non-Friends were in the majority before too much longer. However from the turn of the century to World War II, Jews, Roman Catholics and Asian students were few but not unknown.

At least one Puerto Rican, José Padín '07 graduated from Haverford and went on to a distinguished career in Puerto Rico. Black students occasionally turned up, but they always seemed "just like everybody else." Even a few women students were around from time to time, starting in 1917 when women were admitted to the T. Wistar Brown Graduate School.

And even if there weren't any women or blacks in the student body or on the faculty, women *did* work in the offices, and blacks *did* work on the grounds, and men like Lou Coursey and Cap Harris *did* become campus legends and idols and had roads named after them, and then there was always Ira Reid.

After World War II, the doors opened wider. The persevering director of admissions, Archibald MacIntosh, initiated efforts to attract students from a wider geographical area. Under MacIntosh's leadership, graduates of public schools increased and finally outnumbered private school products.

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As schools like Germantown Friends and Westtown became more diversified, fewer of their graduates followed the traditional footsteps to Haverford. And the ones who did weren't always like the ones who had gone before. The percentage of Jews and Catholics in the student body climbed regularly. The make-up of the faculty began to change.

IMPACT. So there was some ethnic and socio-economic diversity at Haverford, and there were minority groups—even Quakers came to be such a group. But one searches the recorded history of the college and the memories of alumni in vain for any impact minorities might have had.

To be sure, it's tantalizing to speculate: what, for instance, lay behind that impassive dark countenance in the cricket team pictures of Osmond C. Pitter '26, of Newport, Jamaica, British West Indies, star bowler, probably the first black student in the college's history, who just may have surprised everyone by not being a white Jamaican when he showed up in September, 1922.

What did it mean for Paul Moses to come across the fence that did then and does now separate the campus from the South Ardmore black community to attend the college he'd grown up next to? What went on in the meetings of the Chinese Students' Association, which presented a banner to the college on its centenary in 1933?

What lay behind the question of the Jewish alumnus who returned to the campus recently for the first time in years and asked about the "religious situation" and let you know that there might have been some anti-Semitism in his time, but wouldn't say much more?

How unhappy were those women who visited here, worked here, and sometimes taught and studied here with their assigned roles in a male community—and what did the "faculty wives" think?

If people *did* feel discriminated against, or oppressed in some way, or even vaguely conscious that there was something wrong with the adjustment they had to make to Haverford, they kept it to themselves, or perhaps shared it with a few close friends, or, probably most often, concluded that thinking along those lines wasn't going to get them anywhere.

If this community didn't show much interest in or knowledge of the backgrounds and traditions they had come from, well, *they* had chosen to come here, and there wasn't any reason to emphasize that they were different from their friends, and classmates, and professors.

The "Haverford Way" didn't help. In this area, the college was the victim of its own virtues. The Honor System, so much at the heart of the Haverford experience, placed tremendous weight on individual responsibility and individual decisions, and left little room for recognition of group needs or group action.

The challenges of the freshman year, aimed at "breaking down" the preconceptions and prejudices with which a student entered college, also sometimes destroyed parts of an identity whose disappearance left a minority student neither a true Haverfordian nor a member of the group from which he had sprung. The small size and homogeneity of the student body and even the faculty barred the minority student from validating his own ethnic perspective and experience through contacts with others of similar background.

So since Haverford was teaching some important lessons, minority students generally stayed around, learned a great deal, but in the process surrendered much of their heritage, some with an acute sense of loss, some scarcely even realizing it.

For all that, Haverford was no worse and probably a good deal better than many other American colleges, even if it lacked some of the traditional concern for the education of blacks that an

Harris

berlin showed, or if it felt little interest
ı providing the constant association of
ien and women which a Swarthmore
oasted.

And in 1968 when Haverford, prodded
y its new president, John Coleman, took
ı its first comparatively large contingent
f black students, and began to recruit
uerto Ricans and whites from urban and
ural areas, one would have thought that
ere, if anywhere, existed possibilities for
successful relationship between blacks
nd whites, between young men of
/idely varying backgrounds.

COMMITMENT. It didn't turn out
hat way. The years from 1968-70 were
ımes of hope and promise, but were not
vithout frustration and disillusionment,
especially on the part of black students.
3y 1971, many minority group members
ıad concluded the college really didn't
ıave the commitment it seemed to think
t had.

What happened in that period? The
ıumber of entering black students began
:o drop. From 17 in the class of 1972 and
24 in the class of '73, the black student
:otal fell to 14 in '74 and 10 in '75, with
ɔnly about six expected in a much larger
:lass of '76. No matter that the competi-
tion for talented blacks across the
:ountry was becoming fierce, Haverford
was losing ground.

Then another change occurred: the
attrition rate among black students,
Puerto Rican students, and whites from
backgrounds atypical at Haverford rose
dramatically. Many, if not most, of the
students in academic jeopardy were
having problems, not because of any lack
of ability, but because of real difficulties
in feeling a part of the community. Less
than one-third of the black students who
entered in 1968 graduated on schedule
this past May.

Efforts made to ease the transition
from the weak high schools that many
minority students had attended were
sporadic and insufficient. Everyone
agreed a summer pre-freshman program
for such students would help, but the
money just wasn't available. For all
students, the first six weeks of college are
traumatic; for some minority students,
they were destructive.

Whether to provide role-models for
minority students or simply to introduce
diversity of experience, black students
and others thought there had to be more
blacks on the faculty. The college agreed,
but each fall the total of black faculty
members seemed to equal one (though
there was more success in hiring women
faculty members). Some attributed the
situation to the lack of candidates, others
to the general tendency of faculties like
Haverford's to be restricted to products
of Ivy League graduate schools and a few
others.

Student life at Haverford, with its
suite-centered social system, its (just-
remedied) lack of a student center, its
difficulties in providing visible vitality
and cohesion in most athletic, govern-
mental, dramatic, musical, and literary
efforts, did not furnish the necessary
support and creative outlets for minority
students who were often accustomed to
measuring their achievements in these
areas as well as strictly academic ones.

Coursey

But the greatest problem was that the
college did not yet fully realize that it
had to deal with minority students as
individuals *and* as members of groups
with perspectives that were both different
and unique. As a statement adopted last
March by representatives of the faculty,
administration, BSL, and Puerto Rican
students put it: "The black, the Puerto
Rican, as well as other minority group
referents, are a way of perceiving and
organizing experience derived from a
community of common experiences that
people of these various minorities have
transmitted from generation to genera-
tion."

TENSION. Difficulty in understanding
this point had created tension between
many individuals and between the institu-
tion and its minority students. Sometimes
this difficulty was evident on the surface:
debates over rock *vs.* soul music at
dances, for example. Sometimes it was
the result of ignorance: when well-
meaning white students, often from all-
white high schools, would tell black

students, "You guys shouldn't always sit together in the dining center."

Sometimes it emerged in academic policy discussions as when the college seemed to underestimate the importance Puerto Rican students attached to continuing a strong Spanish program on this campus after Professor Manuel Asensio retired.

And it had its most chilling effect when one contemplated the future: black and Puerto Rican students were getting fewer; and lower-middle-class white students were caught in an economic squeeze. All signs pointed to less diversity, more homogeneity.

So late last winter, the black and Puerto Rican students got tired of being asked, "What do you want?" They received support from women and others who felt themselves marginal members of the institution, and forced the college to go through the self-examination described next in this issue.

By the end of the academic year, there were signs of progress: a minority admissions officer and two Spanish professors had been hired; a pre-freshman summer program in cooperation with Bryn Mawr was planned; funds were available for minority upperclassmen to attend summer school; black and Puerto Rican student organizations had a stronger voice in planning policies in admissions and financial aid, counseling, college governance, and library resources.

Student government and just about all student activities were undergoing an unsettling reorganization.

Most heartening, minority students had affirmed that it *was* possible for the majority to understand them and to change in ways which recognized their diversity; black and Puerto Rican students found themselves working in close harmony—these were developments which were occurring on few other American campuses. However, whether the *processes* of the institution had changed to recognize minorities, whether Haverford could use its past strengths to face new needs, whether the college had succeeded in "institutionalizing diversity" —these questions remained to be answered.

Upon these answers rests one key aspect of the college's future: whether Haverford will be a place where graduates of rural, suburban, and inner-city high schools, of Friends' schools and of parochial schools, can study and live together; whether representatives of "other minorities," such as those of Irish, Italian, and Polish descent, will come to the college; whether the curriculum will reflect the importance of various ethnic traditions; whether women will be able to feel comfortable here and to help transform one of the too many all-male institutions in our society; whether, as economics professor Vernon Dixon, the only black member of the Haverford faculty, put it in a recent book, Haverford can be part of "an alternate America in which people mutually acknowledge the authenticity, validity, and value of black and white cultures."

And finally whether the quiet—and valued—Quaker melody Haverford has played for 139 years can truly be mingled with the rhythms of Africa and of Puerto Rico and of other cultures and peoples to produce a new diversity, a blend of the best of the past and the most promising of the future.

Some will say such a synthesis represents a dream, an ideal, a goal, a challenge. Others say that it represents an imperative without which the college cannot—and should not—survive much longer.

Reid

MINORITY* STUDENTS AT HAVERFORD COLLEGE

Class	'66	'67	'68	'69	'70	'71	'72	'73	'74	'75	'76
Students	1	1	1	4	3	2	18	28	17	10	10

*black or Puerto Rican