

From: THE HAVERFORD COLLEGE BLACK STUDENTS' LEAGUE

To: Faculty and Administration

Re: Our Specific Concerns

Date: February 20, 1972

FEB 22 1972

I.

HAVERFORD COLLEGE is a community of friends but we are friends only by means of our socialization. The socio-educational process of the institution emerges from this idea. This process presupposes the commonality of the experience of each member of this community. The assumption, then, of this community is not diversity but homogeneity.

SINCE THE notion of community assumes homogeneity (and community is one of the higher categories of perception here) the institution is opposed to the individual qua individual -- the "different individual" is then doubly suspect.

SINCE THE American experience is pluralistic, differences in consciousness spring, in part, from the protean nature of that experience. Each of these different consciousnesses has its validity not only in that it is a recognition of different histories but also in the place of those histories in the "American melting pot."

AT HAVERFORD College there is no regard for these differences. When the individual becomes matriculated the institution asks him to relinquish his previous experiences, values, ideas and to re-create himself rationally. Ideally this re-creation occurs with the community as a supportive agent. But, since the "community" assumes homogeneity, the community does not support the "different individual" -- in truth, it imposes. Under these circumstances the "different individual," here, the minority student, moves to what is essentially an anomic condition. And the institution allows him three recourses: 1. He exercises his eccentricity; 2. is drawn to or forms a sub-group; or 3. devaluates the meaning of his existence here.

CONCERNING POINT 1. When faced with the imposing perils of homogenization the minority student or "different individual" is offered one recourse: to attach himself firmly to those tangential aspects of his difference. In so doing the "different individual" often becomes a caricature of himself. He attempts to gain access into the community by acting out his perception of how he is perceived.

CONCERNING POINT 2. Whereas the college views the sub-group as destructive of the individual's development, the truth is, the individual is caught in the bind between what would be his supportive group (i.e. the sub-group) and the myth of community.

CONCERNING POINT 3. Either the individual isolates academics from the context of his experience or he regards it as an irrelevant and inadmissible undertaking.

THESE THREE recourses initiate the slow withdrawal of the individual from the institution, Regardless of pre-collegiate

3.

preparation, the college has already determined the success and failure of its educational program.

II.

THE STRUCTURE which proceeds from "community" or homogeneity affects the classroom experience. Not only is the value structure of the individual destroyed, not only are viable social alternatives eliminated, but also there exists no means for the rational re-creation of the individual. That is, the experience with which he would integrate his classroom experience comes from a socio-cultural continuum which in this community has no validity. This homogenizing structure destroys diversity which is the very lifeblood of the intellectual endeavor.

III.

THE CONSENSUS model upon which the classroom and every realm of activity operates assumes that there are no differences which can not be persuaded into alignment with the general view. Therefore, advisory capacities without voting power are seen as sufficient provisions for diversity. Consensus is realized through an appeal to the idea of community, which again, flows from the assumption of homogeneity. Those who are not willing to subjugate their differences for the good of the community are seen as factionary and divisive. Thus, this consensus model offers no real mechanism for admitting real differences.

WITHIN THIS model the individuals must exercise mutual restraint in expressing their views and must not push them beyond what is obviously the group's general view. Professors, committee chairmen

and the president manage difference out of existence.

IV.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S management of the issue the Black Students' League brought to the college community is symptomatic of this effort to deny difference. From the very beginning the effort of the administration was to manage the situation in a manner that was more congenial to the Haverford mold. The peculiarities of the administration's responses, the circulation of these responses, and subsequent discussion stem from the anachronism of the Haverford paradigm. If one follows the course of the last two weeks, one sees swiftly the need of institutionalization of diversity in every aspect of the operations and procedures of the college. From admissions to capital planning, the structure of the college must be such that the true interests of minority students are a constant factor in policy initiation, formulation, and implementation.

IT IS not unrealistic to expect that Haverford College make the following symbolic gestures of good intent by 5:00 (five o'clock) p.m., Friday, 25 February, 1972:

- 1) A presentation of the full college budget that embodies the commitment of institutionalizing the diversity mentioned above and a statement justifying the budget as it is presented.
- 2) A plan for reconstitution of college governance in totality with the end of becoming representative of the actual diversity of Haverford College.
- 3) A suspension of all admissions material to incoming freshmen until the college has provided an accurate portrayal of life here for all students.

- 4) The formation of a search committee with the duty of finding a fully qualified minorities' counselor for the college counseling service.
- 5) Initiation of a summer program for incoming minority students desiring and needing it.
- 6) The initiation of a Visiting Lecture Program which has its emphasis on minority concerns.
- 7) Development of a seminar which would focus upon the legacy of American minorities, which faculty and students would be encouraged to take. This course might be run by juniors and seniors of minorities at Haverford..
- 8) Suspension of student government, all extracurricular activities and student funds until all members of the community are enfranchised.
- 9) A document committing the college to the institutionalization of diversity. This document should be written jointly by the administration and the Black Students' League and other minority students.
- 10) A freeze on all hiring and considerations of tenure, until a college-wide timetable is developed and presented for concrete steps toward the institutionalization of diversity.
- 11) The allocation of funds for minorities enrolled at Haverford to allow participation in various summer school programs.
- 12) The formation of a search committee with the duty of finding a minority admissions officer.

AGAIN, WE regard these actions as symbolic. Greater needs remain to be dealt with, but these cannot come forth until we have a commitment to the institutionalization of diversity.