

LETTER TO THE BOARD OF MANAGERS FROM THE BLACK
STUDENT LEAGUE OF HAVERFORD COLLEGE

From the time that most students first set foot upon the Haverford College Campus they are inundated with a few revered tenets of Quaker philosophy, i.e. a respectful concern for one's fellow man as an individual of ultimate worth and the self-imposed restraints stemming from one's cognizance of the effect his actions may have upon another. Haverford College consecrates itself as a brilliant shrine in a sea of unenlightened philistinism where a man is neither black or white, Jew nor Gentile, Anglo nor African- but rather an individual of ultimate worth. This is a place dedicated to this dream of the individual and his ultimate self responsibility to the community. Unfortunately this is only that- a dream.

This is a dream in the sense that one needs merely to awaken to become conscious of the reality of the situation surrounding him. One needs merely to look at the composition of the Board of Managers and the Corporation to understand that this is an institution governed exclusively by whites. One needs merely to look at the execution of college policy to understand that the administration of this institution remains white-oriented notwithstanding its tokenist gestures. One needs merely to look at the overwhelmingly white faculty to understand that black students

frequently stand alienated from the teachers and their white oriented curriculum. Even the composition of the representatives of the institution who seek out "promising black students" articulates the white orientation of the college. Haverford College may profess that each man is an individual and profess a non-cognizance of race, but black students need only to look at this institution to understand its true constituency. And as one learns to examine more closely the fabric of this grand tapestry, he gradually discovers that all-pervasive imperfection of institutionalized racism; indeed that imperfection symptomatic of our entire society, but that imperfection unexpected in this shrine of enlightenment. So Haverford College stands not as a passive microcosm of this our imperfect society but rather it performs an active function in that it both perpetrates and perpetuates this imperfection.

One needs only to look at a number of incidents to ascertain the pervasive and perpetuating homage which this college pays to that awe-inspiring lord, racism. Look back towards the east and one discovers an overcrowded deteriorating black community strangled between the burgeoning affluence of the main line estates and the open grassy expanses of an academic country club. And in the face of such a discrepancy, how is it that Haverford College discharges its responsibility to its neighbor and salves its liberal conscience? By situating a day camp- a fresh air farm- on its palatial grounds in the off season. Look at

the treatment afforded members of the staff at Haverford College. Persons of fair complexion can violate college ordinances and no sanctions are levied against them, for those higher up have not had the matter brought to their attention. Yet when two black gentlemen commit an indiscretion all clogs of this cumbersome machine function smoothly and these gentlemen are quickly apprehended and suspended; indeed with little regard for the necessarily cruel nature of their sentence as compared with their indiscretion. Look to the lives of the black students on this campus, for here one can readily understand that a prominent administrator can promise to look into the situation of destitution and delapidation of the Black Cultural Center and half a year later nothing has been done. Look to the other students, for here we find fledgelings emulating the racist soars of their gliding elders. Here one discovers that when a campus organization, the Black Student League, presents a substantial budget to Students' Council then they are labeled black separatists and black racists; with Council taking no regard of the fatal logic by which it projects its racist sentiments upon another for merely requesting that which they are entitled to. Look to the Intercollegiate athletic teams where a coach behaves in such a manner towards his black athletes so as to force them to threaten a boycott of athletics unless he radically alters his manner.

We black students realize that we are tenuously situated upon this white campus. We are fully cognizant of the fact that we may be invited to depart in droves just as we came. However, until that time, we will not see ourselves used to ^{the} benefit of Haverford College without it meeting its correlative share of responsibility.

Haverford College has an opportunity which a great number of other institutions of higher learning do not; that is, Haverford has the opportunity to quickly become responsible to this minority of the student body by casting off those vestements of institutionalized racism. It is hoped that Haverford will chose to do so- though it may be that Haverford choses to ignore or even rid itself of this minority. If that is the case, then so be it. But until the time that that decision is made, we the black students of Haverford College are resolved to work, struggle and even fight to eradicate this reality of institutionalized racism at Haverford, by any means necessary.

Most respectfully submitted to the minutes of the Board of Managers of Haverford College....

The Black Student League
May 21, 1971