

### From The Grassroots

## The Destruction of Black Colleges: Part II

By Dr. Manning Marable

The historically Black college is largely the direct product of racial segregation. Ninety one of the 107 Black colleges were established before 1910. Generally underfinanced and inadequately staffed, Black higher education was permitted to exist only in skeletal form during the long night of White Supremacy. As late as 1946, only four Black colleges, Howard University, Fisk University, Taladega College and North Carolina State, were accredited by the Association of American Universities. In the school year 1945-46, Black undergraduate enrollment was 43,878 in the Black colleges. Less than eighteen hundred attended Black professional schools; only 116 were training to become lawyers.

Even after the passage of expanded educational legislation, the number of Afro-Americans who were financially able to attend universities was pitifully small. By 1950, 41,000 "minority" men and 42,000 "minority" women (Blacks, Asians, etc.) ages 18-24 attended colleges, about 4.5 percent of their total age grouping. That same year, by the way of contrast, 1,025,000 white males between 18-24 years old attended college, 15 percent of the total white age group. The function of the Black college was, at least from the view of white society, to train the Negro to accept a "separate and unequal" position within American life.

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, combined with a political shift of the U.S. government under the Johnson Administration toward implementation of some affirmative action guidelines, transformed Black education. By 1970, 192,000 Black men and 225,000 Black women between ages 18-24 attended college. The overall percentage of Black youth enrolled in college, 15.5 percent, contrasted with the white attendance figures of 34 percent for males and 21 percent for females. Five years later, 294,000 Black men and 372,000 Black women between ages 18-24 were in college, respectively 20 and 21 percent of their age group. The most recent available statistics, for the years 1976 and 1977, reveal a slight decline in Black college enrollment--a testament of the political assaults against Black educational opportunity of the 1970s.

The total number of Black college youth slipped from 749,000 to 721,000, and the percentage of Black men who were college students within the 18-24 age group declined from 22.0 to 20.2 percent. Despite the desegregation of white universities, traditionally Black institutions continue to serve majority of Blacks seeking college or professional training. Twenty-five percent of all Blacks in higher education attend the 35 state-supported Black colleges. Over 60 percent of all Black students attend all-Black colleges. Sixty-two percent of all Black M.D.s and 73 percent of all Black Ph.D.s are products of these institutions.

Desegregation proved to be both a blessing and a curse. It created the conditions for a virtual revolution in Black educational opportunities. Simultaneously, the liberalization of white educational institutions permitted many of the best Black intellectuals to leave the South for more prestigious posts at Northern and West Coast universities. The generation of Black middle class professionals trained at Howard and Fisk in the 1940s sent their children to Harvard and Berkeley. The Black Power explosion on white campuses from the mid-60s to early 1970s excellerated the crisis as the most militant and progressive Black scholar/activists left traditionally Black institutions to work in Afro-American studies departments in white campuses.

With the rapid growth of state-supported two year colleges and vocational schools in the 1960s and 1970s, the mostly private Black institutions found themselves in severe financial straights. By 1978 41.8 percent of all Black were enrolled in two-year degree programs, vs. 34 percent for whites. The number of white students transferring or applying to Black campuses jumped sharply. For example, by 1981 the white enrollment at the engineering school at previously all-Black North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro reached 40 percent. First generation college students from low-to-middle income Black families could not afford to pay higher tuitions at private Black colleges. Private foun-

(Continued on page 5)



Dr. Grace Black and Dr. Virginia Curry

## FACULTY FOCUS

By Ronnie McLean

Drs. Grace Black and Virginia Curry have been a part of the University's history for some time and they are influential members of the University family. The sisters have a combined total of 38 years at FSU. Dr. Black, Head of the Division of Business and Economics, came to FSU in 1963. Dr. Curry, Coordinator of the Area of Modern Foreign Languages, began her tenure here in 1961. They both agree that the deciding factors in their move to Fayetteville were the desire to teach at a predominately Black institution and the growth potential of FSU.

Drs. Black and Curry are daughters of the late Mr. and Mrs. G.A. Curry of Kansas City, Kansas. They attended the University of Kansas where there were very few Black students. In spite of problems encountered, they both graduated in the top ten percent of their respective classes.

Dr. Black holds the B.S. degree in Business and the MBA from the University of Kansas and the Ph.D. from Ohio State University. She is a member of many business and professional organizations, including Beta Gamma Sigma and Delta Pi Epsilon. She currently serves on the National Executive Council of Delta Mu Delta National Honor Society and on the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Business Education Association. She is married to Alfred M. Black, retired military and they are the parents of two sons.

Dr. Curry is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Kansas with the A.B. and M.A. degrees in Spanish. She received the Ph.D. from Indiana University. Her first foreign language class was a course in Latin taken from her father at Sumner High School in Kansas City. She became interested in languages and subsequently studied Spanish, French, Portuguese, and German.

Although both sisters graduated with honors, education did not come easy for them. "Willingness to work and inner-determination is the key..." they both agreed. They also believe that in the future "evaluative criteria and standards will be demanding, while competition for financial aid, college acceptance, etc. will be keen. Thus a higher level of productivity will be requisite of all students."

With more competitiveness and productivity being required in the educational arena, Drs. Black and Curry were asked to respond to the question, "Can Blacks really compete?" Collectively the sisters responded with an emphatic "YES!" However, they contend that many times Blacks feel their deficiencies are too great to compete and therefore they handicap their intellectual capabilities. Dr. Black further stated that "students with background difficulties do not have to regard these deficiencies as stumbling blocks that will prevent forward progress."

Finally, in a way of advice to the students, Drs. Black and Curry feel that students should set high goals for themselves and utilize their full potential in the effort to attain those goals. Success is in accordance with a singleness of purpose and steadfast, consistent striving to attain desired goals.

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