

'Dear White People' Movement Must Spur Historically Black 'Welcome Back' Movement

By JL Carter Sr



It's hard not to notice the growing discontent of our young, Black scholars at predominantly white, Ivy League institutions. **We aren't comfortable at Harvard. We aren't comfortable at Michigan. We aren't comfortable at UCLA. We aren't comfortable at Alabama.**

And these are just the examples of the schools making national headlines for racial animus, with all serving as the backdrop for the film 'Dear White People,' a satire that goes to the heart of when neglected and maligned campus identity and culture brings an alleged melting pot to a full boil.

Regrettably, our gross misinterpretation of desegregation and diversity has spawned what feels like a generation of Black students asking white folks for acceptance, even when history, demographics and resources don't bear out any urgent need for white folks, campuses or organizations to do anything without a socially-induced guilt trip. It would seem like the perfect time for alumni and leaders of historically Black colleges and universities to collective stand, extend our arms and shout 'come home, brother; come home sister.'

But to what are we asking them to come home? What are we really asking of students whose professional hopes and dreams have been dyed in the mirage of diversity, and whose self-identity has been smudged by images and stereotypes of Black folks behaving badly and wasting opportunity? What do we say to students between the ages of 18 and 25, whose parents worked hard for them to realize a life of options in college, vocation and lifestyle?

What do you say to those parents and guardians who fought and defeated poverty to give but a glimpse of what opportunity looks like in a country with a persistent, severe allergy to racial tolerance?

Should we tell those students, 'yes, we do have outdated facilities, poor technology, and a mission to serve 10 students who aren't ready for college for every one of you who are primed for excellence?' Or maybe we don't bring up these realities at all, recruit them, and when confronting their cultural and academic dissonance and disappointment in our campuses, appeal to their sense of 'blackness' to see past our flaws and the yet-to-ripen strange fruit of institutional segregation and policy.

We all speak the language of struggle, but with varying levels of fluency. We should never judge Black students or their parents for their successes, or their choices in how to expand success through education. But we also must clearly express that of the many battles we face as a people, focusing on the battle for acceptance in assimilation is the worst strategy possible, and that the fight for equity and resources in our own communities needs more young and upcoming generals.

We must meet the common foe of racial ignorance and policy with the idea that if "they" are coming to reduce and eliminate us, they must find us in our communities, at our schools, standing together for our own causes. We can no longer afford for our best and brightest to have just affinity for HBCUs; they must have loyalty. In truth, most of the Black students who say they love their PWI almaters don't say so because the campus welcomed them, or their expectations of diversity were realized; it is because these students were able to effectively surround themselves with enough Black students, Black professors, Black staff and Black experiences that lowered their cultural dissonance on these campuses to undetectable levels.

If many of our students are going to PWIs to eventually create an HBCU experience, we must be intentional in explaining the difference between experience and culture years before they even begin considering college. And we must go about improving our own campus culture and inviting them to use their intellect, creativity and passion for Black people to be partners in that transformation.

One diligent HBCU student can positively alter the motivation and outcomes of several of his peers, regardless of their level of preparation or individual grit. That is the essence of HBCU culture – when others who look like you, sound like you, feel like you and hurt like you are in front of you showing you how to achieve.

Students must be active partners in the reinvigoration of HBCUs – for too long, we've allowed schools with larger scholarship awards, larger buildings, larger stadiums and larger pools of discrimination to take our students away under the wrong pretenses. And in their youth, Black students are growing in their animosity about the HBCU they always wanted to attend, underperforming and underserving the interests of their friends who did attend Black colleges. They,

even like many of us seasoned HBCU advocates, lack understanding of why Black schools, like Black people, just can't seem to 'do better.'

Our students must know that they can lead us to greater heights with the intellect and passion they show today, and the money and influence they will earn tomorrow. But it's up to institutions to appropriately frame our realities, and how they are continually changing for the better.

We can no longer allow our children to ask white people over yonder for what we should have been giving them from day one – support and education in their own communities, on our own terms.

The Miseducation Of A Nation

By Joseph McGill Jr.



With overnight stays in more than sixty extant slave dwellings, people appear to be most surprised when I mention stays in northern states. The stay at the slave quarters at the Royall House in Medford, Massachusetts seemed to test that theory the most. While some southerners take pride in the fact that their ancestors were not the only ones involved in the institution of slavery, there are some northerners still ignorant of the fact that slavery existed in northern states.



Slave Quarters at the Royall House, Medford, Massachusetts



The Royall House, Medford, Massachusetts

Massachusetts and the enslaved Africans who made their lavish way of life possible. Today, the Royall House and Slave Quarters is a museum whose architecture, household items, archaeological artifacts, and programs bear witness to intertwined stories of wealth and bondage, set against

the backdrop of America's quest for independence. The Slave Quarters is the only remaining such structure in the northern United States, and the Royall House is among the finest colonial-era buildings in New England." I only question the slave quarters being the only such structure in the northern United States but part of the fun in what I do is disproving such claims so the jury is still out on that one. By comparison, it would be the largest free standing slave dwelling that I would sleep in to date. When originally built, it was made of bricks and its orientation to the main house was to the rear left as one would approach from the front. A later addition to the two level quarters with a full basement extended it further forward which would physically put the enslaved inhabitants closer to the main house.



David Petee addressing Tufts University students

My opportunity to spend the night in the quarters would not come until the second night of my visit to Medford because my first night would be spent in a nearby hotel. This was great, but before the hotel stay occurred I had a scheduled presentation at Tufts University which is located on part of the land that was once the 500 acres of property belonging to Isaac Royall. The near capacity crowd included David Petee, a member of the group Coming to the Table and a charter member of the Slave Dwelling Project. David, a descendant of slave owners, spent the night with me and others at the Bush Holley House in Greenwich, Connecticut. During



Worry is a total waste of time. It doesn't change anything. All it does is steal your joy and keeps you very busy doing nothing.

I'LL BE DAMNED IF I AM GOING TO SIT AND WATCH OUR KIDS CONTINUE TO GROW UP BELIEVING THAT IT'S COOL TO BE IGNORANT, VIOLENT, HIGH, DRUNK, BROKE, UNEDUCATED AND LAZY.

