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WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT
ARCHIVES

VOICE

Vol. VIII, No. 2 Western Kentucky University Fall 1988

Western's Civil War: Division Among Black Students Hinders Progress

Obvious division among Western's black students could mean sudden destruction if something is not done.

For generations blacks have fought prejudice to gain acceptance. They have stood together, strong against overt discrimination to defend their case for justice. But somewhere in the struggle blacks have begun to fight among themselves.

Blacks compose only 7 percent of the 15,000 students at Western and according to several students, there is definitely division among Western's black community that must be reckoned with.

Black Student Alliance president Kimberly Summers said that one definite indication of black division can be seen in the lack of participation of blacks in the student alliance. Summers said that out of approximately 800 black students at Western, only 51 are members of the alliance. "There is only a select few in BSA," Summers said.

Summers, a Louisville junior, said that the main reason blacks on Western's campus are divided is jealousy.

"That's why blacks don't get ahead, because they are envious and they take things too personally," Summers said.

Summers was recently confronted with the consequences of black division when she was nominated as a Homecoming Queen candidate and didn't place among the winners. "If blacks would have voted, I could have won. There was a prejudice in why they didn't vote for me," Summers said. Summers said the many students didn't vote for her because of personal reasons such as she was "stuck-up," "involved in too many activities" and she acted like a "white person."

Summers said one way blacks could become more unified is for every black student to become a member of Black Student Alliance and any other organiza-



A House Divided Against Itself Shall Not Stand

tion on campus—black or white.

Dwayne Haun, a Louisville freshman, said he feels blacks are divided because they don't realize the importance of unity. "A lot of blacks are split because everyone has their own little cliques," Haun said. You see the same black people in DUC and football team players and basketball players stick together as one."

Haun said, "Blacks should present themselves more friendly and not be so quick to judge one another. You have to put that 'he said, she said' stuff aside."

Jill Nevels, a freshman from Florence, agreed that there is definitely division among blacks at Western.

"Within every black group there is division. You have people that hang

around people because of how they look or dress, like: light skinned girls, football players and basketball players," Nevels said.

Nevels, who is light-skin with blond-tinted black hair, said that although her hair and face are different, "we are all black."

Nevels also said that blacks appear "together" on holidays.

"Blacks like to unify on holidays and put their best foot forward. During the holidays, we're like a family but after the holiday we go back to the way we were with the jealousy and separation."

by Gwendolyn Fountain

Change Now Or Suffer Later

Editor's Message

The audacity of the black students on this campus amazes me. After four years at Western, I have seen and heard a lot of things which overwhelmed me but those things pale in comparison. I have just finished a random poll of 100 on-campus black students. They were asked over the phone seven questions. Some of the answers surprised me but most of the responses were what I expected. However, what shocks me is how the theories contradict practice.

One case in point is the question: Do you think it is vital to have an office which addresses the concerns of the black student? Everyone polled answered "Yes!" However, of the same 100, only 29 students surveyed had used the services of the Office of Black Student Retention. According to Della Elliott, coordinator of the office, only 84 of Western's 866 black students have come to her office. Some had good excuses. 28 students said they had never heard of the office but other explanations ranged from "I've been meaning to go" to "I ain't had any problems yet."

What is happening? For years you gripe about how the system is working against you and when it does something for you, you don't use it. By not utilizing this office, you are telling this university that it is not needed. Yet everyone believes that it is. What nerve!

Students were also asked, "How can relations between Western black students be improved?" The most common answer was through unity. The second most common answer was "I don't think relations can be improved." Once again I was struck by the irony of the situation.

Almost everyone who said unity was needed to improve relations suggested more activities and organizations. But what is the point of adding more activities and organizations when the ones that are in existence are not used? Less than 10 percent of the black student population attends Black Student Alliance. And according to my poll, of the 93 people who knew about BSA, only 27 of them had *ever* participated in it. When the Offices of Black Student Recruitment and Retention, BSA or any other black organization host an activity, the turnout is so incredibly low that the sponsors leave feeling disappointed and discouraged. Why should they knock themselves out when they are not going to receive any support or recognition for their efforts?

Black students take a very good look at yourselves. Maybe it is not the system after all. I am constantly hearing whinings of how Western is not a good environment for blacks. Well, this semester two-thirds of Western's black student body had academic deficiencies. That fact may prove the validity of the environment theory. But what has been done to change it?

Della Elliott thought it would be a good idea to have organized study hall. Her supervisor in Academic Counseling, Marlice Cox, and the Dean of Student Life, Howard Bailey, gave her the leeway for such a project. And after much advertising and word of mouth, a study session was created. But since its beginnings in mid-October, less than seven students have participated. Is that the system's fault, too?

I could give other illustrations but what good would it do? After four years, I have been forced to agree with the group that said relations cannot be

improved. You see, although we are older, we are not wiser. We haven't learned anything. I hear adults saying, "I didn't speak to her because she didn't speak to me." I see people walking past each other behaving as if the other person did not exist. At events designed for socializing, students are getting threatened with guns, knives and fists. Supposedly mature young people still talk about what each other is wearing. And don't let anyone find out anything about your personal business: it becomes student center gossip.

When do we grow up and begin taking responsibility for our actions? When do we learn to look beyond name-brand tags and hometown boundaries and learn to communicate and socialize?

I have a 9-year-old sister named Jolisha. She and her friends on the block could put Western's blacks to shame because they are doing the same things that you can see any day while walking through the student center. Jolisha and her friends talk about kids who don't wear the same tennis shoes or have the same styles in clothes. They push and shove each other to make a point. And they roll their eyes and whisper behind each other's backs. The difference between my little sister's clique and Western's black students is the kids know how to act in public.

Isn't it time to act like adults? Isn't it time to overcome the silly prejudices which separate us? Isn't it time to prove that our forefathers struggles were not in vain? Black students, if you do not respect yourselves, no one will respect you and if you do not act with dignity, no one will treat you with dignity. It's time to change.

Marcia S. Robertson
Editor

Theories Vs Practices: Actions Fail to Compare to Attitudes

100 Students surveyed

Do you think it is vital to have an office which addresses the concerns of the black student?

Yes: 100 No: 0

Have you heard of the Office of Black Student Retention?

Yes: 71 No: 29

Have you ever used any of its services?

Yes: 29 No: 71

Have you heard of Black Student Alliance?

Yes: 93 No: 7

Have you ever participated in Black Student Alliance?

Yes: 27 No: 73

Why is apathy prevalent on this campus?

Three students were asked why blacks at WKU seem like they don't care.



Penny Clarkson, Ekron junior

"People have the attitude that they don't care because it seems like we are always going to be a step behind. Once you try to run and hit a wall, you may try again but after a while you get tired of trying. Then you stop trying. You stop caring."



**Nathaniel Farmer, Vine Grove senior
President of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.**

"I don't know why. Freshmen come in and they see upperclassmen not caring, so they don't care. And when they become upperclassmen, they still will not care. The cycle never ends."



Tonya Board, Louisville junior

"There are no guidelines for people to go to class or participate in activities. And since there are no set rules, people do whatever they want. That includes doing nothing."

Professor Watches Helplessly As Apathy Destroys Blacks

Dr. Paula Quinn has watched a disease spread across the desks of her black students and into the mainstream of the black community. But despite her efforts, she knows there is nothing she can do to stop it.

She calls the disease "apathy."

"Both academically and socially, it seems like black students just don't care," Quinn said. "Among the black students, it is one big shrug."

Quinn, a journalism professor, came to Western about three years ago. In 1986, she became faculty advisor to Western Kentucky Minority Communicators, Western's student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists. Since then, Quinn said, students appear to have lost all interest in things which concern them.

"I have found it difficult to motivate minorities to participate in any activities. Some black students don't want to come to class because they feel they know everything about reporting already. I have had many black students and they sit in class as if I am wasting their time. They don't turn in assignments. And

they get upset if they get a bad grade."

Quinn said that she has seen a similar form of behavior in the students who are members of WKMC.

"I have really picked up the attitude at the (WKMC) meetings," Quinn said. "It doesn't seem important to them to have this organization. They don't want to come to meetings and they cannot wait to leave. They do not realize how important it is."

Because of the nonchalant attitudes among blacks, Quinn said many students will find the "real" world a very harsh reality.

"They don't want to pay the dues. They don't want to work hard for their goals. They can be hired because of their race but they can be fired because of their inaptitude."

Quinn said that she used to put forth an extra effort to help black students. She said she would tell her students about the National Association of Black Journalists, minority job conferences and various scholarships and internship programs available for blacks. After a while she realized that her efforts were not

generating any responses.

Then, she explained, she decided it was time to let students help themselves. "I had done all I could. Eventually, I realized that they had to want to be helped.

Quinn said a primary cause of the apathy among black students was the desire to blend into the mainstream and lose their identity.

"Everyone wants to be in the status quo. Black students don't want to be different. Whenever I announce something in class about NABJ, the black students look around as if they do not know who I am speaking to.

According to Quinn, something "dynamic" needs to happen to shock the students back into reality.

"Something very negative needs to happen to jolt the black students. I hate to think it takes another "Student Mother" incident to make them aware of what is happening but if something does not happen, they will not be ready for the real world. It will destroy them."

by Marcia Robertson

Helping Hands

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

This federally funded project provides **counseling and free individual tutoring** for eligible participants. For further information, contact the program office in TPH 235, phone 745-4308.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING & RETENTION

Free counseling services, advisement in course scheduling, study skills, etc. For more information contact the office at Potter Hall 109. Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. or call 745-2793.

ACCOUNTING

Free tutoring for students who need help in elementary accounting classes (Accounting 200-201). Grise Hall, room 436 on Monday 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday 2-3:00 p.m. Call 745-3895 for more information.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE SYSTEMS

Free typing lab in Grise Hall, rooms 523, 526, 530 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, when rooms are not being used in class sessions.

AGRICULTURE

Free consultation with Department of Agriculture faculty members. Environmental Science and Technology Building, Room 268, by appointment. For further information contact Dr. Luther Hughes at 745-3151.

ALLIED HEALTH

Free individual tutoring available in Dental Hygiene and Healthcare Information Systems classes for those who qualify. Possibly more services will be available later in the semester. For more information contact Dr. Ruby Meador at 745-2427.

BIOLOGY

Study Hall for Biology 131, TCNW 210 and 212, M-TH 8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon and Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Contact Wayne Mason 745-6012. This study hall is an opportunity for Biology 131 students

to study lab or lecture materials on their own Assistance will sometimes be available. For private tutoring contact Barb Dykstra or Ben Howard at 745-3696.

CHEMISTRY

Chemistry Learning Lab, Thompson Complex-North Wing Room 317. Monday-Thursday 10:30 a.m.-4:20 p.m. Contact Dr. N. W Hunter at 745-3457.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Programming Consultation. Thompson Complex - Central Wing, room 233; Grise Hall, room 239; Science and Technology Hall, room 204. Monday-Friday 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Help is offered in debugging programs and with equipment problems. Contact Lab Assistant at 745-2541.

ECONOMICS

Economics 206 (Statistics) Lab, Grise Hall Room 439. Open Monday, 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Wednesday, 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact Economics Department at 745-2249.

ENGLISH

WRITING LAB. Cherry Hall 120. Hours 9:15-3:00 Monday-Thursday.

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Microcomputer Hardware/Business Software Lab, Grise Hall Room 336. Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday 2:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Free tutoring in biostatistics. Science and Technology Hall, Room 410C. Hours vary; contact Dr. Baum at 745-4797.

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

EET Course Tutoring. Science Technology Hall room 312, call John Carr at 745-5857 for appointment. Woodworking Opportunity Lab. Industrial Education Building room 101. Call Dr. Frank

Pittman at 745-5397 for appointment.

MATHEMATICS

Math Lab, Thompson Complex-Central Wing. Lobby. Open:

Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Friday 8 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Sunday 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

MODERN LANGUAGES AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

Beginning language students may get assistance in the departmental language laboratory. Spanish/German/French/Russian Language practice labs, Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center, Spanish/German Room 240; French/Russian Room 248. Both labs open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Contact Dr. Carol Brown at 745-2401.

NURSING

Free Tutoring in nursing skills and counseling for Diabetic students. Academic complex 112D. Call Nancy Lindsey at 745-3758 to set up an appointment.

OFFICE OF BLACK STUDENT RETENTION

Free counseling services, assistance in study skills social and personal problems, tutorial referrals. Contact Della Elliott, Potter Hall 120, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., or call 745-5066.

PHYSICS

Call Dr. Humphrey at 745-6197 for more information.

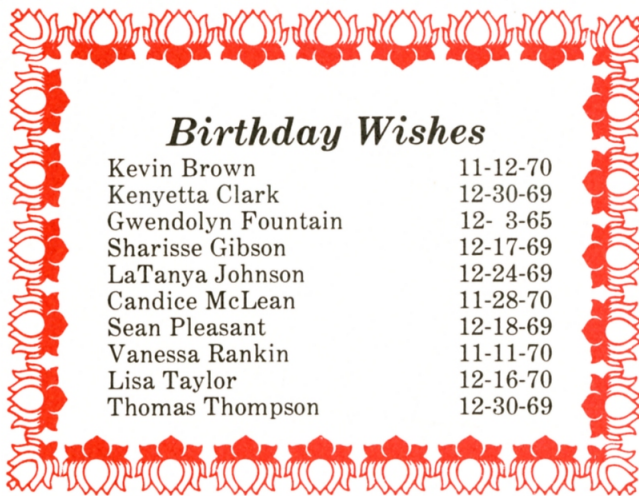
PSYCHOLOGY

Tutoring in Psychology 100. Tate Page Hall. Contact David Ball at 745-6314 for appointments.

SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY & SOCIAL WORK

Free computer lab for Social Science Computing. For further information contact Dr. John Faine at 745-2291.

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Birthday Wishes

Kevin Brown	11-12-70
Kenyetta Clark	12-30-69
Gwendolyn Fountain	12- 3-65
Sharisse Gibson	12-17-69
LaTanya Johnson	12-24-69
Candice McLean	11-28-70
Sean Pleasant	12-18-69
Vanessa Rankin	11-11-70
Lisa Taylor	12-16-70
Thomas Thompson	12-30-69

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VOICE

The Voice, a bisemester newsletter prepared for black students at Western Kentucky University.

If you would like to submit writing or photographs to *The Voice*, please contact Marcia Robertson at the Office of Black Student Retention for details. The Office numbers is 745-5066.

Marcia Robertson
Editor

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