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# The Feasibility of Establishing a Library-College In Predominantly Negro Colleges

by

E. J. Josey

## Negro Students' Reliance on Negro Colleges

Fifty percent of all Negro college students in the United States are enrolled in predominantly Negro colleges and universities. In spite of the desegregation of institutions of higher learning in the South and the stepped-up recruitment of Negro students by major colleges and universities throughout the country, the largest number of Negro citizens will continue to receive their undergraduate education in these institutions. Young Negroes will attend these institutions primarily because they are relatively inexpensive, they offer remedial course work (which is a necessity for many young people who are enrolled in poor southern high schools), and because of the proximity of these institutions and/or their geographical accessibility.

The first and most striking reason for Negroes to continue to gravitate to predominantly Negro institutions of higher learning is the fact that a large number of Negro families in this country are poverty-stricken and cannot afford to send their children to college. Those families that struggle against overwhelming economic odds and sacrifice to send their offsprings to college have only one choice—the Negro College. On the other hand, a small proportion of young Negroes are being recruited from the ghetto by leading American colleges and universities, but those that are being recruited are young people with exceptional abilities and who need little or no remedial education. It becomes crystal clear then that the Negro college offers the only ray of hope for the vast majority of young Negroes desiring a college education.

The financial plight of young Negroes attempting to acquire an education was graphically portrayed by a leading Negro Sociologist, Whitney M. Young, when he stated that "many of them are doing so at great sacrifice to their families and their own efforts to help others often keep them from continuing their own education. One student said: 'I'd like so much to go to grad school, but I've got to get my sister through college first.'"

Even though legal barriers have crumbled in the South, the Negro poor must choose the Negro college, because it costs less. Most of the predominantly Negro colleges in the South charge less tuition than white colleges in the region. In some instances not only tuition, but dormitory, board, and general fees are substantially cheaper than the former all-white institutions. The low economic status of the Negro, in general, illustrates with dramatic effect why the young Negro in the South must select the Negro college.

The second reason why Negro colleges will continue to attract hundreds of young Negroes is a disturbing one. By and large, only a small percentage of Negro youngsters are enrolled in integrated public schools in the South. Before intransigence and the backlash triumphed, the U. S. Office of Education's Federal Guidelines were making significant changes in the segregated educational pattern and may have altered dualism in American education. It may very well be that Negro youngsters in segregated schools in the South and in ghetto schools of the North, because of de facto segregation—segregation reflecting segregated housing patterns—may now look forward to a superior education in integrated schools with superior facilities in view of Federal Judge J. Skelly Wright's monumental decision in the case of *Hobson vs. Hansen* and the Board of Education of the District of Columbia.

Judge Wright's decision underscores the fact that segregated schools give young people little or no skills to use in competition with the vast majority of American who desire a place in the over-crowded colleges and universities in this country. It is his opinion that "racially and homogeneous schools damage the minds and spirit of all children who attend them—the Negro, the white, the poor, and the affluent—and block the attainment of the broader goals of democratic education, whether the segregation occurs by law or by fact. . . ."

Continuing, the distinguished jurist declared "the scholastic achievement of the disadvantaged child, Negro and white, is strongly related to the racial and socioeconomic composition of the student body of his school." From this observation alone, it becomes clear that the bulk of America's Negro college students are in dire need of remedial courses, when they begin their college education journey.

Recent data on the performance of Negro students reveal the following: "College Board scores in most Negro colleges seem to average in the 300's, and some Negro colleges report medians in the 200's. This means that the typical student at one of these colleges ranks in the bottom 5 or 10 percent of those taking the CEEB tests. Or to put it another way, perhaps no more than 10 or 15 percent of the students at most Negro colleges rank above the national undergraduate averages on verbal or mathematical tests."<sup>1</sup>

So huge is the educational gap between what Negro students should know when they enter college and what they actually know in terms of test scores, most of the 123 predominantly Negro colleges and universities do not engage in selective admission practices and are committed to an open door policy thus making it inevitable and necessary that they offer remedial instruction in order to help these young people to overcome their educational deficiencies. This idea was succinctly stated by a leading Negro scholar, who viewed the role of the Negro college as "taking students who have experienced cultural deprivation and preparing them in the short span of

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, "The American Negro College," *Harvard Educational Review*, 37:24-25, Number 1, 1967.

the college experience to compete on a basis of equality with other American college graduates.”<sup>2</sup>

And now we come to the third reason why young Negroes will seek admission to Negro colleges, i.e., proximity or geographical location. This reason may be the most complex and puzzling to whites, especially those who do not live in the South. The Negro population has grown tremendously during the last twenty-five years. Nevertheless, more than half of the nation's Negro citizens continue to make their home in the South. Even with such grand designs as the Mississippi plan to starve them to death thereby attempting to force migration, the bulk of America's black citizenry like human beings everywhere are reluctant to move away from familiar surroundings and their homes. Hence, the South will continue to be the home of the vast majority of Negro citizens for decades to come.

Of the 123 colleges and universities established primarily for Negroes, all except five are in the South where half of the Negro population live. The immediate consequence of proximity, coupled with the other two factors enumerated above, is that these colleges will attract the largest number of college bound Negro students.

### **A Panoramic View of Negro Colleges**

The fundamental question raised by the necessity of Negro students having to rely almost solely on Negro colleges for their higher education is one that is enormous and one which must be explored: what is the position of Negro colleges in America today? Indeed, it is difficult to grapple with this question in a few sentences, but an attempt will be made to offer a few generalizations.

Whitney M. Young Jr. in his recent newspaper column, “To Be Equal,” gave a vivid description of the plight of Negro colleges when he wrote “they labor under great handicaps. Our big universities have millions of dollars endowment income, but these schools have to scrape along on a shoestring. While some support comes from the United Negro College Fund and other institutions and individuals, there is a crying need for help to enable them to do the job which must be done.

“They are certainly being shortchanged not only by private sources, but also by government. For example, only 2.7 percent of all state aid to higher education went to predominantly Negro colleges, and they got a shameful less than 1 percent of all federal aid. Some non-monetary help is coming from programs like the Urban League's Summer Fellowship program. This program enlists business firms which provide summer employment for faculty members, giving them the experience with the techniques of modern industry, which they can then impart to their students.

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<sup>2</sup>Martin D. Jenkins, *The Morgan State College Program—An Adventure in Higher Education*. Baltimore, Md: Morgan State College Press, 1964, p. 3.

The Negro college offers the only chance for most Negro high school graduates in the South to continue their education. And in addition to this task, many of the colleges are also enrolling poor white students from their areas."<sup>3</sup>

Supporting Young's thesis regarding the financial difficulty that a sizeable number of Negro colleges find themselves, a recent study reveals that "when we turn from the top dozen private Negro colleges to the sixty-odd obscure ones . . . these colleges typically have no endowment whatever, no alumni capable of supporting them at more than a token level, little time or imagination to develop programs which would get federal or foundation support, few contacts with the men who distribute such funds, and no obvious appeal to white philanthropy . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Against this backdrop of a financial crisis in Negro colleges, a picture emerges which shows that these institutions have difficulty recruiting competent faculty, establishing innovative curricular programs, amassing a minimum collection of books and materials for their libraries, and in general, fostering an intellectual tone, which will nourish a climate of learning on their campuses.

The recent announcement that the Ford Foundation would provide a \$1.1 million program to aid 52 Southern Negro colleges in breaking out of their academic and cultural isolation is a step in the right direction. Although the amount of the grant is woefully inadequate, it is a positive beginning which will aid these institutions in such areas as faculty development, curriculum improvement, library development, compensatory education, and student personnel services.<sup>5</sup> If additional funding can be obtained from the Ford Foundation and the other richly endowed foundations in the country along with help from federal sources, Negro colleges will be in a position to strengthen their programs as well as provide a first-rate collegiate education.

For the record, I must hasten to add that some viable academic programs do exist in the better Negro institutions. Programs at Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, Hampton, Clark, Lincoln, Dillard, Morris Brown, Morgan, and Tuskegee compare favorably and in a few instances are superior to programs in some white institutions. Nevertheless, in the main, improvements must be initiated in the majority of these institutions.

In spite of the dismal and bleak drawn portrait, the Negro college has been in its own way an intellectual oasis in a desert of hatred, fear, segregation and anti-intellectualism. Long before the southern states provided state supported institutions of higher learning for Negroes, these citadels of learning performed a yeoman task of bringing light where there was darkness and giving hope to the hopeless.

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<sup>3</sup>Whitney M. Young, Jr. "To be Equal," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, June 10, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Jencks and Riesman, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>*New York Times*, July 7, 1967.

## The Potential of the Library-College in Negro Colleges

Up to this point in our consideration of the possibility of Negro colleges adopting the library-college concept of learning, it was necessary to review a few of the problems that have plagued Negro colleges and their students. Now let us examine a few of the library-college precepts and then try to determine if they are employable in predominantly Negro colleges in America.

Active as the discussion on the library-college has been, it does not appear to have given consideration to poverty-stricken Negro colleges or colleges that have enjoyed only an economic marginal subsistence. Viewing these colleges from this economic stance, is it economically feasible for these institutions to convert from their traditional role to the revolutionary idea that their colleges would become libraries? Is it possible for these institutions that have patterned their programs after the majority of American institutions of higher learning now become a Library-College?

A random check of twenty administrators of predominantly Negro colleges revealed that not one of them had ever heard of the term library-college. When asked to define the concept, this writer suggested that the library-college is a college in which the learning made is predominantly individual in character, with emphasis on independent study and located in a library building. Most of these educators scoffed at the idea, and one asked if this idea was primarily a visionary idea of librarians. Dan J. Sillers comments at the Drexel Institute's Conference on the library-college were prophetic when he admonished that if there is to be implementation of the library-college, the idea has to be communicated to educators and not just librarians alone. This small sampling supports his point of view.

The father of the library-college idea, Louis Shores, Dean Emeritus, Florida State University, Library School, presented elements of the library-college at the Drexel Institute's Conference on The Library-College.<sup>6</sup> The elements include the following:

1. The learning mode—There will be a shift from the classroom to the carrel as the learning *locus* with emphasis on independent study.
2. The library—Materials used in the library will be the generic book which includes information in various types of format; books, film, film strips, closed circuit TV., dial access, etc.
3. Faculty—The new college calls for a new kind of faculty; the new breed will be a cross between librarians who like to teach and professors who like to use the library in their teaching.
4. Curriculum—The curriculum would be a broad curriculum which will be reflected in the library's holdings.

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<sup>6</sup>From notes taken at the Conference.

5. Facility—The learning resources center would reflect all media placed in proximity of the student in his carrel; the entire student body would be seated in the learning resources center.
6. Organization—There should be a student enrollment of 500 or less; when the enrollment increases, start a new college which could emerge into a cluster of colleges.

I will not belabor the implications of Shore's elements of a library college, for I believe that they speak for themselves. But let us examine these elements in light of some of the problems facing Negro colleges.

As I examine the learning mode, there seems to be no special difficulties that Negro colleges would encounter in shifting from the classroom to the carrel except for the following: (1) There will be an urgent need to orient faculty to give up their cherished right of being the dispenser of knowledge in the classroom and leaving their students alone to study individually in carrels. (2) There will be an urgent need for a large capital outlay of funds for the procurement of carrels for each student. (3) In view of the fact that Negro students' high school education has not been independent study in character, these students would have to be taught how to study individually thus freeing them from complete dependence upon their professors.

With reference to their libraries and holdings, most Negro college libraries continue to be book centered and do not possess materials in various kinds of format. All of these libraries have a few newspapers on micro-film, a few film strips but no facilities for closed circuit TV and dial access is out of the question. Moreover, the most recent survey of Negro college libraries reveals that they do not meet minimum book collection standards.<sup>7</sup> A further check of *Library Statistics of Colleges and Universities, 1965-66* indicates that most of these institutions must undertake a crash acquisitions program before minimum standards are achieved. Not only must these institutions acquire the generic books, but they must obtain books per se before one can assume that a viable library situation exists in these institutions. The foregoing facts should not militate against Negro colleges acquiring the generic book, however, funds must be forthcoming from foundations or federal sources which will underwrite the stocking of libraries with adequate materials to support this kind of a learning resources center.

Perhaps the most interesting of Shore's innovation for the library-college is his clarion call for a new breed of faculty. This writer shares his belief that a library-minded faculty is essential to a good learning situation.<sup>8</sup> Is it possible for the faculty, who are more conservative and conventional in their teaching habits to make the transition to this new breed type? I do not wish to intimate that faculty

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<sup>7</sup>E. J. Josey, "Negro College Libraries and ACRL Standards," *Library Journal*, 88:2989-2996, September 1, 1963.

<sup>8</sup>E. J. Josey, "The Absent Professors," *Library Journal*, 87:173-175, 181, January 15, 1962.

members at Negro colleges are any more conventional or conservative than faculty in other American institutions; yet, faculty at Negro colleges emulate their professors in the graduate schools and would not wish to innovate to an extent that they would be different. Negro faculty especially emulate what they consider the best in white society even if this best may be characterized as “. . . ill-staffed caricature of white education—which was, after all, easy enough to caricature.”<sup>9</sup>

Essential to the success of the library-college is the faculty, for Shores believes that “prerequisite to a library-college is a new breed of faculty — a cross between today’s library-conscious classroom instructors and teaching-minded librarians.” As I ponder over Shore’s words, I vividly recall my eleven years as the librarian of two predominantly Negro colleges. I remember only a small number of library-conscious instructors. Most of the faculty like traditional-acting faculty in many American colleges taught in the form of a monologue with little opportunity for students to exchange view points or for providing for the tapping of the resources of the library. It was necessary in both institutions for the librarian and his staff to employ all kinds of devious means of encouraging the faculty to exploit the resources of the library. On the other side of the coin, there are librarians in Negro college libraries who would not wish to become teaching librarians, but there are many who would be intellectually adventuresome enough to become teaching-minded librarians.

The upshot of the foregoing discussion is that if a college decides to become a library-college, it must be ready to assume the major responsibility of reeducating its faculty, and in many instances, a gigantic in-service program for faculty must be launched. An in-service program for faculty should not be viewed as a monumental task, for one predominantly Negro college, Morgan State College, used this approach in acquainting the faculty with library reference tools in order that the faculty could participate in the instruction of freshman students in the use of the library.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the professionally educated librarians could offer in-service courses in the literature of various subject fields of their faculty colleagues; senior professors in these subject areas who possess exhaustive bibliographic knowledge would, in all probability, be anxious to assist the librarians, thus, the faculty in Negro colleges would emerge in the words of Shores as “a bibliographer extraordinary.”<sup>11</sup>

How would Negro students react to the new breed faculty member? From my observation of the Negro students of the sixties, who are sensitive to the social currents of his day and who are anxious to be released from the shackles of discrimination, inequality, and an inferiority complex because of the precarious position that the Negro

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<sup>9</sup>Jencks and Riesman, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup>Georgetta Merritt, “Library Orientation for College Freshman,” *Library Journal*, 81:1224-1225, May 15, 1956.

<sup>11</sup>Louis Shores, “The Library-College Faculty,” in *The Library College*. Philadelphia: Drexel Press, 1066, p. 73.

finds himself will welcome the new breed faculty who embrace them as partners in the teaching-learning process. The new teaching-learning locus places faculty and students on a footing of personal equality that is rarely seen in the traditional Negro college. Advocating this idea in animating language, Jordan states "where the faculty is the dominating element on a campus, it is easy for them to assume the role of superior beings, approachable only by formal and respectful rituals. Where the library is the key and focal point in the campus environment it is much more difficult for the faculty to maintain a posture of superiority because the silent phalanxes of information on library shelves stand neutrally waiting for exploitation by faculty and students. Just as we are equal before God so are we equals before the resources of a great library."<sup>12</sup>

On a number of these campuses, faculty and students have little or no dialogue outside of the classrooms, and it is my opinion that the library-college would foster better faculty-student relations. Commenting on a visit to Savannah State College campus, a noted American scholar disclosed that "I ate in the faculty dining room on Monday and Tuesday and it seems to me that students and faculty had almost no contact outside of class."<sup>13</sup> There must be a change from this sorry state of affairs, for often times it is through informal discussions among students and faculty members that will stimulate, challenge, motivate and arouse the intellectual curiosity of students. If Negro students are to overcome cultural deprivation, herculean efforts must be made outside of class as well as in the classroom. The library-college certainly offers hope in this area, and it will not permit faculty in Negro colleges to be disdainfully uncommitted.

For fear that I may obviate the obvious, I am offering no commentary on the need for a broad curriculum which is needed in many American colleges including Negro colleges.

Turning to the facility for the library-college, most Negro colleges would be in dire need of a large capital outlay of funds to provide for a learning resources center which would reflect all media placed in proximity of the student in his carrel. Before I think in terms of estimated costs for an installation which will provide a carrel for an entire student body, let me say a word or two about the current use of the new technology in Negro colleges in general.

By and large, a large number of Negro colleges during the past few years have established audiovisual centers where classes may come to view films, filmstrips, and these centers serve as depositories for projectors, tapes and other equipment. For foreign language instruction, they also have installed language laboratories, which are the extent of facilities for independent study, except for those institutions that have recently built new libraries and have acquired traditional library carrels, which will seat only a small portion of their students.

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<sup>12</sup>Robert Jordan, "The Library-College—A Merging of Library and Classroom," in *The Library-College*. Philadelphia: Drexel Press, 1966, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>Letter from David Riesman, December 5, 1966.

The most sophisticated audio laboratories at a Negro college to be reported in the literature recently is at Virginia State College—Norfolk Division.<sup>14</sup> Of course this installation is not library oriented (the library has a catalog of all of the center's tapes), but it does have great potential for individualized instruction and is purported to serve "over 50 percent of the potential users and operating at over 70 percent of capacity . . ." <sup>15</sup>

What has been done generally with the use of audiovisual materials in instruction on Negro college campuses heretofore has been rather limited and independent learning has been primarily one of supplementing the classroom and not utilizing class time as envisioned in the library-college. However, it is this writer's opinion that if adequate funds were available there are some librarians and a small number of faculty at Negro colleges who are innovative enough to attempt this brave new world of undergraduate education through the medium of the library-college.

What would be the cost of building a new facility to support a library-college? It is suggested by Donald K. Stewart of Texas A & M University, that a dial access information retrieval system may be estimated "by using cost figures from \$250 to \$600 for each receiver location and from \$100 to \$400 for each program source (audio only). Depending upon the instructional and technical specifications, the cost of an installation could exceed or be under this estimated price range."<sup>16</sup>

McClendon of Oral Roberts University reports that at his institution "the computerized dial access audio-video system is located in the six-story, \$3 million Learning Resources Center consisting of four and one-half acres of interior space distributed over six floors. The initial system installation cost was \$615,000."<sup>17</sup>

From the information presented regarding the cost of the installation of a facility as a vehicle for the library-college, it becomes immediately inevitable that the conclusion to be drawn is that it is two costly for the many financially struggling Negro colleges to consider. Unless outside financial resources can be tapped, the greatest impediment to Negro colleges in providing the proper facility for a library-college is money.

As regards to Shores student enrollment ceiling of 500, I do not think that this will create a problem for the very small church related colleges. The dangerous situation will arise when an attempt is made to divide the student bodies of some of the predominately Negro state colleges into a cluster of colleges. It is my belief that educators will be reluctant because of traditional attitudes, which

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<sup>14</sup>Jack B. Krail, "The Audio Laboratories at Virginia State College (Norfolk Division)," *Audiovisual Instruction*, 12:460-463, May, 1967.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 463.

<sup>16</sup>Donald K. Stewart, "The Cost Analysis of Dial Access Information Retrieval System," *Audiovisual Instruction*, 12:433, May, 1967.

<sup>17</sup>Paul I. McClendon, "Oral Roberts University's Dial Access Audio-Visual System," *Audiovisual Instruction*, 12:466, May, 1967.

will have to be changed for the purpose of keeping a student body within the bounds of what is considered an optimum size for a library-college.

### **Possibilities and Opportunities**

I have sought to comment on the problems and the possibilities of establishing a library-college in predominantly Negro colleges. I have dwelt less on possibilities because of the numerous problems that these institutions would face in reorganization, reorienting faculty and above all the acquisitioning of funds that must be procured to accomplish this task.

Of great advantage to the students in a library-college would, of course, be the individualizing of their education which will create innumerable possibilities for Negro students who come from culturally deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds. Those students who are alert and academically talented would not be in an educational lockstep, and they could proceed learning at a faster rate. As we consider independent study as holding limitless opportunities for students in Negro colleges, there will be a large number of faculty who are tradition-bound and would fight to the death not to give up their most noble part of teaching, the lecture. There is a persistent notion that learning has not taken place unless one lectures.

I cannot overemphasize the great stimulus to learning that students in these colleges would enjoy, because of the availability of knowledge in a variety of formats. Having come from ill-starved secondary school libraries, most of these young people have not been avid readers. Thus, the audio and video materials will do much to stimulate new intellectual excitement. On the other hand, as I pointed out earlier, most of these students will have to be taught how to study in order to reap the maximum benefits of the library-college.

Finally, should Negro colleges become a library-college? It would be intellectually dishonest or a little short of ludicrous for me to answer this central question completely in the affirmative, for there are too many unresolved questions and problems that must be answered by the faculty and librarians in these institutions. A library-college will not succeed unless the administration and the faculty of these colleges are convinced of the merits of the program. In spite of the fact that I have joined the library-college priesthood, firstly, because of the infinite educational opportunities for students who attend predominantly Negro colleges, and, secondly, because of the more active role that librarians and libraries will play in the educational process, I would recommend that only those institutions that possess experimental potential and that are able to acquire the resources—interested and committed administration and faculty, funds, and facilities—should establish a library-college.

The rapidly changing world in which we live today is testimony to the obvious fact that education is a life long activity for all citizens who do not wish to become obsolete in their profession. The library-college offers hope by providing students with the skills, which will enable them to live successfully in their personal as well as their professional lives.