

A SALUTE TO BLACK HISTORY

Minority Students Progress

Office Of Minority Affairs

University Of Washington



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Supervisor

When the Black American thinks of the Bicentennial he (she) thinks not only of the things that happened 200 years ago, but also of the things that have happened since then. Black Americans view the Bicentennial not only in light of the country's avowed goals of liberty and equality but of its actual practice in carrying out these great commitments. The Black American thinks of what was, what is and what could have been.

When Black Americans reflect upon the high-sounding ideals which were proclaimed when this nation was founded they hardly feel the inner glow that most of their white countrymen are likely to experience. Drawing from their knowledge of what their forbearers underwent, and from their own encounters with life one quickly realizes the gulf between the ideals of democracy on the one hand and its practice on the other. Education has been seen as the leveling force, hence, in our history, Black students and their supporters have demanded that institutions of higher learning recruit and respond to the needs of minority youth.

There is a high road and a low road to education in America. Travelers on the first are largely suburban, white and middle class. Those who trudge the second are urban, usually minority, and most often of limited financial means. Superficially, the two roads are well-paved routes to the good life. But they are not, in fact, the same. The high road leads from well-kept homes, through bright, well-financed schools to colleges and universities, then on to a lucrative life. The low road leads out of the ghettos, through dark and frequently ill-financed classrooms and often times returns to the dismal environment from which its travelers have come.

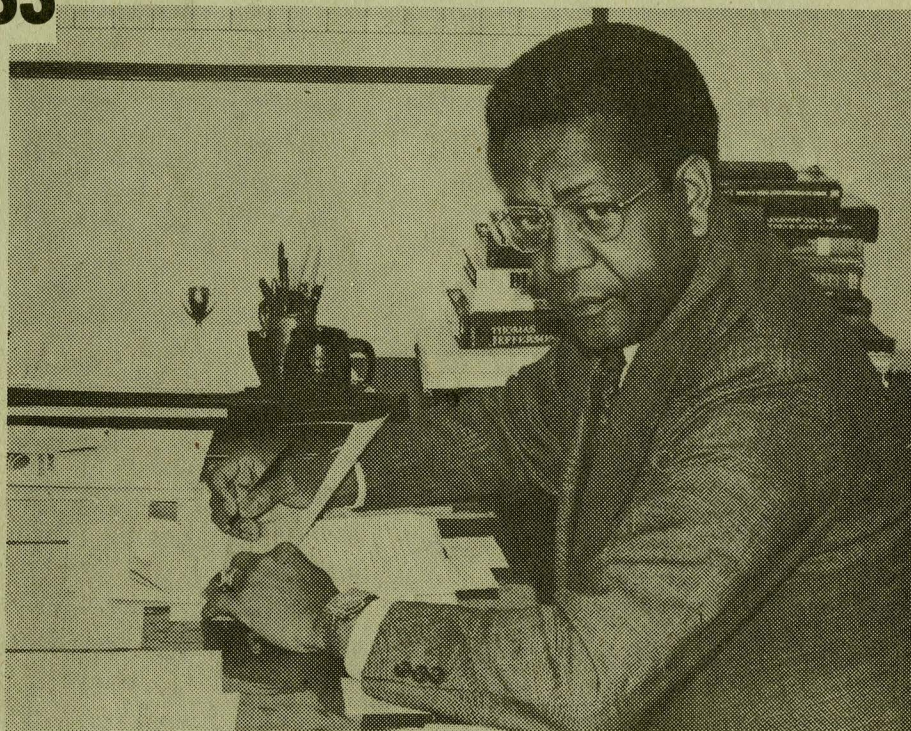
The two roads have been running through American history since its beginning. During the more than two hundred years of slavery it was a crime to teach slaves to read or write. The scholarly slaveholder, Thomas Jefferson, expounded the equality of all men, but excluded Blacks whom he said were "inferior to....whites in the endowment of body and mind".

Such generally low regard for Black people and a desire to continue exploiting them after slavery made it easy to justify third rate Black education in the segregated schools of the South and in the so called ghettos of the North. One of the major institutions for transmitting and perpetuating racism is the school system, which contrary to the American myth, is neither "public" in the sense of being responsive to Blacks and other nonwhite minorities, nor able to educate, in the sense of meeting the needs of all the students and reflecting their diverse cultures, values, and histories.

The Educational Opportunity Program of the University of Washington was conceived and has functioned for seven years on the concept that the highly visible minority groups have been victimized by a history of discrimination in this country. There has been and continues to be a sustained commitment of the University to the Educational Opportunity Program and to the idea of equality of educational opportunity at the University of Washington. Likewise, the growth of the program and the educational attainment of its students has exceeded the expectations of many and is recognized by even our critics as a success. Last year, for example, enrollment in the Educational Opportunity Program increased by more than three hundred students. The total minority student enrollment at the University increased to 11.5 percent of the overall University enrollment compared to 4.0 percent in 1968-69.

The academic achievement of minority students should be recognized, for indeed the basis for enrollment is the successful striving toward a degree, as the success of such a program is reflected by its graduates. The average cumulative grade point average for EOP students during Spring quarter 1975 was 2.54 and since 1969, over 1,000 minority students have graduated through the Educational Opportunity Program, truly a historically significant accomplishment.

Although it has taken nearly two hundred years, the Educational Opportunity Program at the University of Washington is changing the dream of equality into reality. There are now more than 3,500 minority students enrolled at the University of Washington. These students can honestly say that public education is beginning for minorities. In spite of the fact that liberty and equality have not been fully extended to minorities, the success of EOP is a significant sign. It will not take minorities another 200 years to win the fight for equal liberty.



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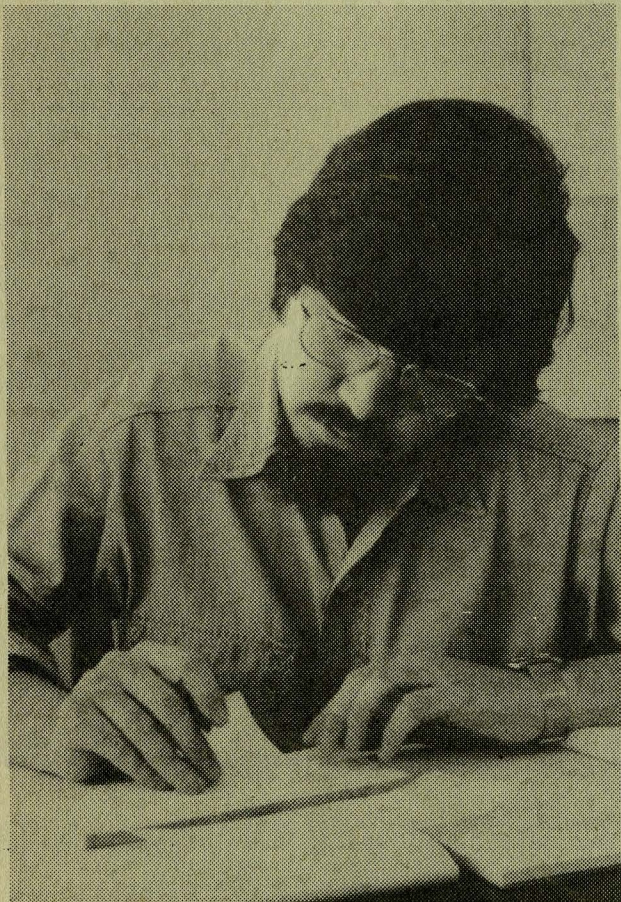
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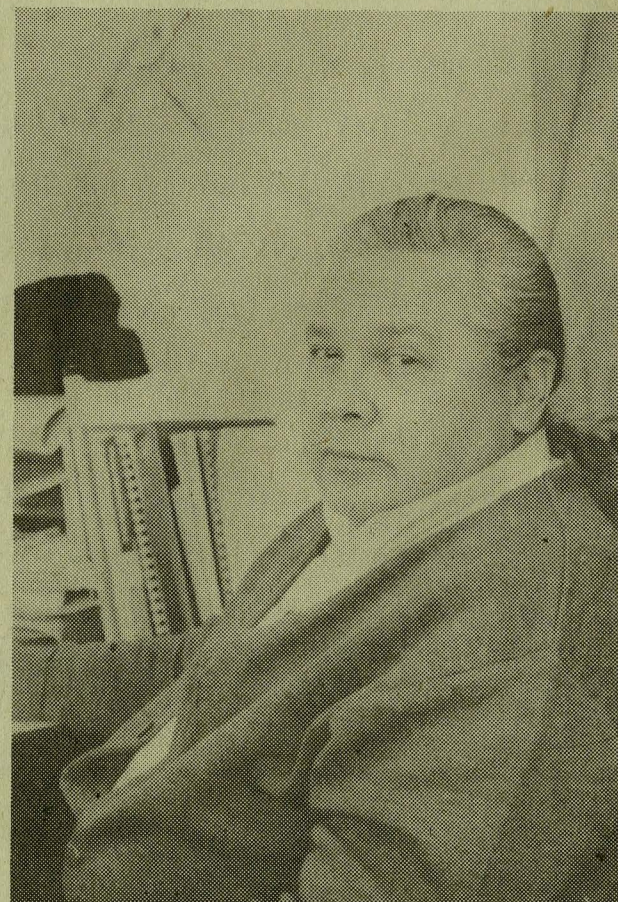
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