



March 2013

## **Draft Report on Social and Cultural Environment on UTK Campus as it Affects Blacks**

Commission for Blacks

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### **Recommended Citation**

Commission for Blacks, "Draft Report on Social and Cultural Environment on UTK Campus as it Affects Blacks" (2013). *Miscellaneous Memorandums and Reports*.  
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## ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

One of the most strongly felt concerns expressed to the Task Force by black staff and students at UTK relates to the social and cultural environment on this campus as it affects blacks. Basically the concern is that there are not enough black-related activities and opportunities so that the black person can maintain and develop his social and cultural identity. The problems in this regard are compounded by the relative lack of black presence at UTK. Moreover, the issue extends beyond one of concern over formal institutional structures, and is expressed in terms of a general feeling of isolation and lack of identification in a university environment that is predominantly white both in numbers and attitudes.

These problems are by no means peculiar to this campus. They exist on all predominantly white campuses with a black minority presence, and they are symptomatic of the large problems and challenges of cultural accommodation facing the black and white population of this country today. The core issue revolves around the philosophic and practical tensions of fostering greater cultural harmony between the races while at the same time enabling each race to maintain its own social and cultural identity. The challenges in this regard are particularly relevant to institutions of higher learning, one of whose primary goals is to understand the individual human being and to provide means for achieving fuller humanistic development and self-realization.

The Task Force is aware that the largest part of expectably significant advances in this area must depend on non-institutional and informal perceptions of individuals relating to each other in their day-to-day lives. For this reason the Task Force views its role as being in part educational, in the hope that by bringing such concerns to the attention of the University community at large each person in that community may become more aware of his or her individual challenges and opportunities to achieve greater cultural awareness and individual sensitivity. At the same time, the Task Force believes that there are specific institutional concerns that should be closely examined and in some instances changed in an attempt to improve the cultural environment on this campus for black and white interrelations, and it is to these concerns that this section of the report is primarily addressed.

## BLACK AFFAIRS CENTER

For several years black students on this campus have expressed a desire to see a Black Affairs Center established at this University. For example, the black student questionnaire conducted by this Task Force in June of 1973 shows that, of the 214 students who responded, 169 or 79% favored the establishment of such a center. (Eight students did not respond to this question, 19 were neutral, and 18 did not favor its establishment.) The leaders and directors of the AASLF, of the Office of Black Studies and of the Office of Minority Affairs favor having such a center. A non-formula justification for such a center dated 2 October 1972, a memorandum dated 25 October 1972 from the Coordinator of Black Studies to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs of this campus incorporating by reference a letter dated 3 October 1972 from the Director of the Black Student Educational Cultural Center at Florida State University in Tallahassee, a chart describing operational aspects of similar centers at other colleges and universities, a letter dated 3 April 1974 from selected black faculty and staff at UTK addressed to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs advocating establishment of such a center and setting forth the reasons therefor, and a detailed proposal for such a center dated 24 July 1974 prepared by the AASLF on this campus are attached as appendices to this report.

One of the major problems has to do with defining the role and purpose of such a center, if it is to be established. Would it

duplicate the functions of existing institutions such as the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Black Studies, AASLF, or the Office of Minority Affairs, or could it perform a distinct role? Would it function primarily as a social gathering place for blacks, or would it also offer presently unavailable culturally educational programs and activities that would interrelate blacks and whites in greater mutual understanding? Could the monies necessary to establish and maintain such a center be more effectively spent through presently existing structures, as for example in bringing more black-related social, educational and cultural programs to this campus? Conversely, would establishment of the center result in any significant diminution of the University's present commitment to provide black-related cultural events for the benefit of the campus at large?

A case may be made for establishing a Black Affairs Center even if its primary function eventuates in providing a social meeting place for blacks on this campus. One of the repeated concerns of black students both on this campus and on campuses across the country is that they feel more or less estranged from the predominantly white educational, social and cultural institutions that make up the typically white-dominated campus. A Black Affairs Center would enable blacks to have a distinct location where they could reinforce their own separate social and cultural identity. Balanced against these considerations are questions regarding whether such purposes would best serve the long-range interests of either blacks or whites on this campus. Both races are in sub-

stantial need of greater mutual awareness and understanding, and only those institutional commitments should be undertaken which in the considered judgment of the University will aid in achieving these goals.

This Task Force recognizes the need for additional focus and activity on this campus relating to the black experience, in order to further the goals both of enhancing self-awareness and identity on the part of blacks and of developing greater awareness and understanding by non-blacks of black perceptions, needs and contributions in our society. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the University give careful attention to the establishment of a Black Affairs Center as an adjunct of the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. This recommendation is based upon the conception of such a center as an administrative extension of the general academic effort of the University. The Task Force conceives the role of the proposed center as one designed to describe, understand and communicate the nature of the black experience in contemporary society to the general University community through a variety of structured and unstructured, formal and informal programs; the Black Affairs Center would function as a facility which would involve the cooperative efforts of blacks and non-blacks of the Knoxville campus and the local community. Such a facility should be centrally located on the campus so as to be physically as well as psychologically an integral part of the University life and readily available to all who wish to avail themselves of its opportunities.

The Task Force cautions that successful performance will depend to a very large extent upon the manner in which its basic conceptualization is communicated to the University as a whole and upon the strength of administrative, faculty and student leadership in support of the Black Affairs Center as here recommended. The Task Force urges that the Chancellor's Office assume and exercise the leadership necessary to accomplish the intent of this recommendation.

## BLACK GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

Black students on this campus have also expressed an interest in the colonization of a second black sorority and a second black fraternity at UTK. (Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and Omega Psi Phi fraternity are already established here.) Student interest in this regard appears to be less, however, than that expressed in favor of a Black Affairs Center. For example, the June 1973 black student questionnaire conducted by the Task Force shows that only 38% (82) of those answering were favorably disposed toward the present black sorority on this campus; 30% (67) were neutral, 18% (39) had an unfavorable attitude, and 12% (26) did not respond to the question. Forty-two per cent (91) viewed the black fraternity favorably, 33% (70) were neutral, 14% (29) expressed an unfavorable attitude, and 11% (24) did not respond to the question. If we assume that these attitudes toward currently established black Greek organizations are indicative of black student attitudes toward establishing further Greek organizations on this campus, then the attitude is not strongly favorable. Such an assumption may be invalid, however, since alternative organizations might be viewed favorably although present ones are not.

In addition to the above-mentioned black sorority and black fraternity that are presently colonized on this campus, there are other black Greek organizations that have graduate chapters established in Knoxville and that are colonized at Knoxville College, viz.: Sigma Gamma Rho sorority, Zeta Phi Beta sorority, and Kappa Alpha Psi, Phi Beta Sigma and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternities. An undetermined number of black students at UTK are members of these



organizations. It is recommended that UTK student participation and interest in these organizations be monitored by an appropriate body of the University, to the end that colonization may be undertaken whenever it appears that a sufficient level of student support is established as to any one or more of the organizations.

A special issue is presented regarding the colonization of a second black sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, which some students propose, in that this sorority is primarily service-oriented rather than social in purpose. Its aims, as expressed in its national charter, are to promote social welfare, academic excellence and cultural enrichment, while de-emphasizing the social side of sorority life, and its membership policy is non-discriminatory regarding race, color, creed, religion or national origin. It has 492 chapters with a membership in excess of 65,000 as of May 1974. These chapters have engaged in such public service activities as the establishment and operation of child development and child day centers, providing college application funds for needy students, establishing talent search programs to motivate promising low-income high school students to enroll in post-secondary educational and training programs, operating remedial reading tutorial programs to aid functionally illiterate persons to improve their reading and writing skills so they may obtain better job training and opportunities, and conducting rehabilitation programs for offenders in female reformatories.

The Director of Student Activities has stated, as a reason for not colonizing a chapter of Delta Sigma Theta on this campus, that there is insufficient space to accommodate another sorority within the Panhellenic Building at this time. However, since this

is primarily a service as opposed to a social organization, space could be provided elsewhere as is presently the case with other campus service organizations.

In view of the valuable community-service and educational purposes which this organization provides, this Committee recommends that careful consideration be given to the issue of determining whether there is and probably will continue to be sufficient interest and participation to support colonization of a chapter of Delta Sigma Theta on this campus; and if such probable support is found, we recommend colonization of the chapter.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Another area of black student concern involves the choice of entertainers brought to this campus. Basically the complaints are that not enough black entertainers and other entertainers with black appeal are brought here, and that those who are brought are not the ones that the bulk of the black students would prefer--in other words, that an informed selection is not made. Moreover, the responses to the June 1973 questionnaire indicate that more black cultural events rank among the top three items, along with recruitment of more black faculty, staff and students, that would make the respondents' stay here more pleasant.

The Director of Student Activities, in an interview with members of this Task Force, sought to explain some of the difficulties involved in scheduling entertainment. He stated that four all-black concerts scheduled during 1973, for example, were substantially financial failures. Apparently none of the four, he said, were significantly supported by black students. The losses on each concert ranged between \$2,000 and \$4,000. Entertainment programs of even moderate caliber, he stated, require about 3,000 attendance in order to be economically feasible. Even if all the black students on campus attended a particular program, according to the Director, there would still have to be substantial white attendance in order to assure economic success of the program. Therefore, he said, programming must take into account white as well as black interests.

The Director stated that black participation on various entertainment organizational committees is actively sought by his

Office, often without appreciable success. A black is usually appointed to the 3-person Student Activities Board. During 1973-1974, the vice-chairman of this Board was black.

Black student responses to these positions place different interpretations and emphases on the circumstances of entertainment planning. They point out that programs with predominantly white appeal also may not be, and on occasion have not been, financial successes, and that the key to financial success in any event lies in better overall entertainment selection and promotion. They assert, moreover, that the leading popular black entertainers will have a broad appeal both to the black and the white community. Such entertainment should be strategically scheduled so as not to conflict with other major entertainment or educational programming in the University and City. Advertising and promotion, both within the University and the community at large, should be more flexible and imaginative in order to appeal to those who do not otherwise respond to traditional newspaper and centralized poster advertisements. For example, more localized advertisement, and personal contact with black organizations and areas of black concentration, may be significantly more effective in eliciting black response. Advance sales should not be over-emphasized in determining probable attendance at black entertainment functions, since students and particularly black students appear not to have a tradition of advance-purchasing for such functions.

It is important also, black students contend, not to emphasize financial success of entertainment programs as an invariable criterion of their real success, since some programs may not be successful

financially but may nevertheless serve an important social and educational function in the life of the University. There may be programs, for example, which will have a specialized appeal for blacks and which should not be approved or disapproved primarily on the basis of economic criteria. Nor should the financial soundness of black entertainment groups, they assert, be more closely scrutinized than that of comparable white groups.

Regarding black participation in the committee and other planning, selection and promotion stages of University entertainment, black students contend that more flexible and non-traditional recruitment methods are appropriate. While black students may not generally respond to a Beacon solicitation for participation in this regard, they would respond much more readily and effectively to personal solicitation channeled for example through the AASLF, or through other black-related institutions on this campus.

The Task Force believes that student complaints regarding the selection and promotion of entertainment on this campus should be carefully considered by the University administration, since substantial black student dissatisfaction with present programming is apparent. Greater sensitivity to the interests and viewpoints of blacks in this regard appears appropriate. In particular, we recommend that the Office of Student Activities undertake broader, more intensive and non-traditional methods for obtaining both formal and informal black input into the formulation and implementation of campus entertainment programs.

## HOUSING

Off-campus housing presents problems of race discrimination for black faculty and staff as well as students. In the 1973 student questionnaire, 26% (57) of those responding stated that they had encountered obvious racism while attempting to secure off-campus housing. (Thirty-two percent had not had such experiences, 41% had not sought such housing, and the remainder were unsure whether they had encountered racism in this respect.) Our interviews with black faculty and staff indicate that off-campus housing discrimination has presented a problem for some of these people also.

Recently an off-campus housing office has been established as a part of the services of the University, and this office lists only the names of those landowners who agree not to discriminate on the basis of race or sex in making their property available to renters or purchasers. The name of anyone who is shown to have violated his agreement in this regard will be removed from this list. It is too early to determine the effectiveness of the office, but the Task Force considers its establishment to be a needed step in the right direction. Its usefulness to the University community will depend in large part on how diligent the office is in compiling its housing list and in assuring that those listed comply with their non-discrimination agreements. We urge the University to pursue these objectives vigorously as important factors in the University community.

We would emphasize that problems of off-campus housing discrimination may be subtle and difficult to identify, as evidenced

by the facts and opinion in the recent housing-discrimination case of United States v. Saroff, 377 F. Supp. 352 (E.D. Tenn. 1974), tried in the federal district court at Knoxville, Tennessee. A copy of that opinion is attached as an appendix to this report. In view of these difficulties, we recommend that the off-campus housing service of the University, and those utilizing its services, exercise diligence and thoroughness in investigating claims of alleged discrimination, that they resolve balanced conflicts of evidence in this regard in favor of an overall policy of implementing open housing in the community, and that they seek legal advice and judicial enforcement of rights of equal housing whenever resort to these remedies seems appropriate.

On-campus rooming assignments are handled through the Office of Housing of the University, and assignments are made on a random basis. After initial assignments are made, students are allowed free choice in their selection of residence halls and roommates. Black students have tended to concentrate in three or four of the residence halls, and most roommate choices are intra-racial.

There have been occasional reports of racial friction or misunderstanding occurring within campus housing, although such incidents have apparently been relatively minor in nature. Some of the residence halls having a substantial inter-racial component have instituted informal counseling sessions on race relations among the residents. We recommend that this procedure be continued and emphasized, since it offers a valuable opportunity for development of inter-racial awareness and understanding.

## COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS

There are various mechanisms, both formal and informal, for resolving complaints on this campus, including those involving alleged racial discrimination. The Chancellor has asked this Task Force to address itself particularly to the role of one of the primary mechanisms, the Council on Human Relations.

The Council was established on this campus approximately four years ago. It is composed of faculty, administrators and students. It was created by the Chancellor to advise and recommend in the area of human relations, to receive suggestions and complaints, to initiate inquiries and hold hearings where appropriate, and to maintain liaison with individuals, committees, departments and offices of the University regarding matters that may come before the Council. In an interview with members of this Task Force, Council members stated that they meet on an average of about once per month. They have considered a variety of problems including dormitory race relations, athletic racial policies, off-campus housing discrimination, the desirability of establishing an additional black sorority, playing Dixie at football games, classroom dress codes, and the like. They have been interested in establishing some kind of program to advance race relations in the dormitories, but have not yet undertaken such an activity.

Members of the Council expressed uncertainty regarding their proper role in the University--specifically, whether they should regard themselves primarily as an investigative group, as a grievance-hearing panel, as an educational organ, or as some of each of these. Council members pointed out that hearing grievances is in itself



a very time-consuming activity, and that members have only a limited amount of time to devote to Council activities because of their other commitments. Sex discrimination complaints, moreover, are now dealt with by a separate University group.

It appears to the Task Force that the Council cannot properly serve the functions both of grievance investigation and policy initiation in the area of race relations, since the dual role involves too great an undertaking for the allocable resources involved. It would seem that the grievance-investigation function is one that may be more appropriately removed from the Council's duties, since this function may be fulfilled by other entities such as the ombudsman, the Coordinator of Minority Affairs, by a Director of the Black Affairs Center if such position is established, and by investigations at the departmental or administrative level.

The Task Force perceives a need, however, for an ongoing campus organization that will inform itself on a broader level of overall race-related issues and policies on this campus, and that can formulate and recommend practical and innovative programs to improve the inter-racial quality of life on the campus. This function, we believe, can be undertaken by the Council on Human Relations as reconstituted in accordance with the recommendations of this report.

While the Council should not undertake to conduct and resolve investigations of individual or specialized complaints, it should have access to the results of such investigations whenever made, and should recommend that such investigations be made whenever appropriate. It may also formulate and recommend the implementation of activities and programs to improve the inter-racial quality of life on this campus, although it should not have the responsibility

for their actual implementaton. It should report directly to the Chancellor of the University, whose responsibility it should be to cause the implementation and dissemination of information and policy recommendations from the Council.

In order to be most fully effective, it is important that the Council represent a cross-section of campus interests, and that those interests also include those most closely connected with black interests and concerns on the campus, as for example the Coordinator of Minority Affairs and others similarly situated. The Council membership and its chairperson should be rotated at reasonable intervals, and black as well as white representation should be included at both the chair and membership levels. In an attempt to aid in our conceptualization of a re-defined role of the Council, the Task Force submits as an appendix hereto a suggested revised charge to the Council on Human Relations.

## KC - UTK INTERCOMMUNICATION

Effective in January of 1975 there has been instituted under the joint auspices of Knoxville College and UTK a shuttle bus running between these campuses, beginning each class day with the first class period and continuing hourly throughout the remainder of the class day. Arrivals and departures on this campus are from the bus stop at the Student Center. The present bus is a 12-passenger vehicle, and a larger vehicle will be provided if the demand arises. The purpose of the shuttle is to facilitate cross-campus commuting for KC students taking courses at UTK and vice versa, and also to encourage social and educational interchange generally between these two campuses. Also, approximately 100 copies of the Daily Beacon are delivered to the KC campus each class day, in a further effort to implement this interchange.

The Task Force views these cooperative efforts between the two campuses as positive steps in the direction toward fulfilling our mutual educational obligations to the community at large. We urge that such efforts be continued and expanded on these and other levels as occasion and opportunity arise.

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

A congenial environment for blacks is determined not only by black presence measured by the number of black students and faculty and black-related social and cultural activities on this campus, but also by greater black presence in non-academic staff positions of importance to the campus. In this regard, the Task Force is particularly concerned with the role of the Safety and Security force on this campus. This force numbers over 100 persons, while there are only three or four blacks on the entire force. Moreover, black students have repeatedly complained regarding what they perceive to be an insensitivity to racial concerns on the part of individual members of the security force as evidenced in their handling of investigations on this campus.

The Director of the Physical Plant, under whose overall authority the security force lies, emphasized in an interview with this Committee the difficulty of recruiting blacks for the security force, although the basic requirements of a high school education and good physical health are minimal. Whether pay scale, working conditions or recruitment methods account for this lack of black presence is unclear. The Director also stated that he would like to see quality educational sessions in racial awareness and sensitivity instituted for employees of the physical plant in general (of whom there are approximately 800), and particularly for the security force, in order to improve racial relations both within the force and between it and the University population in general.

We believe a concerted effort should be made to recruit more blacks into the security force, and that racial sensitivity sessions

of the kind mentioned above should be furnished for such personnel. We are particularly concerned that these recommendations be pursued with regard to the security force, since this force as the visible symbol of authority on the campus should not be substantially a monolithic white organization. The relations between security personnel, on the one hand, and the student body or faculty or other staff members, on the other, are potentially sensitive in any context, and a substantially all-white security force that is possibly unaware of or insensitive to racial concerns needlessly exacerbates the difficulties inherent in the relationship.

## SYMBOLIC OFFENSES

Repeatedly during its tenure this Task Force has received complaints regarding various offenses to the sensitivities of blacks caused by others who do not give adequate consideration to black feelings. These complaints range from concern over the playing of Dixie at football games, to student display of Confederate flags in dormitories, to enforcement by some instructors of dress codes regarding wearing hats or dark glasses in class where the effect of such codes appear to be specifically directed at blacks. Other black students have complained that instructors appear to single them out in noting their nonattendance at classes.

Some of these perceived affronts may be based on inappropriate inferences regarding the offending party's intent to affront. Others may arise out of careless disregard for the feelings of blacks. And some may be intentional. This Task Force believes that the University community should make every reasonable effort to avoid such unnecessary incidents. Most of the conduct of this sort serves no useful purpose, occurs through oversight or thoughtlessness, and should be eliminated. With regard to enforcement of dress codes, the Task Force believes that there is no legitimate interest for such procedures and that the University should so state as a matter of educational policy.

## APPENDIX

### PROPOSED REVISED CHARGE TO THE COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS

The University of Tennessee is committed to a policy of improving the inter-racial quality of life and understanding on this campus for blacks and whites, including students, faculty, administration and other supporting staff. The Council on Human Relations is hereby constituted by the Chancellor to advise and report to the Chancellor at such times as the Council or the Chancellor deems appropriate on policies and programs which the Council perceives as necessary or desirable to achieve this objective. In order to carry out its function, the Council:

1. Shall review significant race-related concerns that come before other bodies or institutions of the University from time to time, including any indications of racial discrimination or apparent lack of commitment to or implementation of policies of affirmative action for the betterment of inter-racial relations and understanding at all levels of the University, and for this purpose the Council shall have access to all relevant oral or written reports of other persons or entities in the University on request, and is authorized to advise and consult with any persons or entities in the University to aid in or supplement any such inquiry.

2. Shall recommend to the Chancellor that specific investigations or inquiries concerning race-related matters be undertaken by an appropriate body of the University where their need or desirability is indicated.

3. Shall formulate and recommend to the Chancellor policies and programs for implementation by appropriate University bodies to improve inter-racial relations and understanding throughout the University.