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History Department Response to Black Task Force Recruiting Questionnaire July 16, 1973

Commission for Blacks

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HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Response to Black Task Force Questions

July 16, 1973

1. At the beginning of the staffing for the 1973-74 academic year the Department was particularly eager to add a woman to its roster and for several months focused on this objective, applying to the Women's Roster of the American Historical Association for information concerning women scholars in the several specialties which the Department then was considering. Obviously, under these circumstances we hoped that we would receive dossiers concerning Black women as well as White or Asian women scholars. Subsequently, we became more concerned about certain specific fields of scholarship, and in the February issue of the Employment Information Bulletin circulated by the American Historical Association we ran a notice of a position with the notation, "Applications from women and minorities candidates welcomed." Again, it was our hope that Blacks and women, as well as others not at present represented on our staff, might apply. It should be noted that the specific areas in which we were at that time interested and in which we subsequently made an appointment; namely, American Urban, Labor, Economic, or Progressive Era, with emphasis on Quantification techniques, are fields to which a limited number of Blacks have been attracted.
2. Basic to the recruitment of Black faculty members is the small number of able trained persons available. Further, inasmuch as we are not alone in our desire to add Black faculty members, we are in competition with schools which often are more attractive, either in terms of money, location, or prestige, as well as those predominately Black schools to which some Black scholars feel they should devote their talents. It should be pointed out that some Northerners are rather reluctant to come into the South when they can find good posts elsewhere.
3. Periodically in the past I have taken advantage of my friendship with a number of Black scholars in my field to enlist their help. I didn't happen to this year, inasmuch as I am embarrassed to return year after year to bother them when it has been their and my experience in earlier years that they were unable to suggest candidates who they felt would be appropriate for our openings. I can think of no particularly effective approach to the resolution of this problem until such time as larger numbers of Blacks successfully negotiate the Ph. D. path.
4. We do not have any special procedure for recruiting Black students, *if that is what you mean*
5. Although affirmative action is most commonly used these days with respect to the employment of women scholars, I presume in the context of this inquiry you are thinking in terms of the employment of Black faculty. As a minimum, it is my assumption that the term reflects a receptiveness to adding women and Blacks to a department; at its best, I presume, it would reflect a conscious and active effort to do so.

R.P. Shaw