The American University and the Pluralist Ideal

A Report of the Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education at Brown University

And a Dissenting Opinion by Lerone Bennett, Jr.
May 9, 1986

Dear President Swearer and Trustees of Brown University:

I am pleased to transmit to you the report of the Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education at Brown University. As this report details, the members of the Visiting Committee met together four times to consider the curriculum, faculty composition, student support programs, residential life and the campus environment with special attention to the implications for minority students. We believe this report addresses the charges given to the Committee by the University and by student organizations.

On behalf of the members of the Visiting Committee, I want to thank the students, faculty, administrators and trustees who gave so generously of their time. It would not have been possible for us to have developed our understanding of the complexities of these issues without the written materials, thoughtful letters, and insightful comments from literally hundreds of members of the Brown community. Our special thanks go to representatives of the Third World student community for their active participation in the entire process, from the development of the charge to the Visiting Committee to the formulation of specific recommendations for action.

We hope this report sparks constructive action for true cultural pluralism at Brown University.

Sincerely,

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"American University and the Pluralistic Imperative" represents a dissenting opinion based on a previous report entitled, "The American University and the Pluralist Idea". Lerone Bennett Jr. was a member of the Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education at Brown University, a seventeen-person panel which was convened in October of 1985 to evaluate current programs and to make recommendations for new strategies for improving the climate of race relations at the University. The Report of the Visiting Committee was presented to the Fellows and Trustees of the Brown Corporation in May 1986. Mr. Bennett is Senior Editor of Ebony Magazine and author of Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America; What Manner of Man: a Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Confrontation: Black and White, and other popular historical and political works.

The basic theme of the Majority Report is endorsed by Mr. Bennett's statement. The tone of the Minority Report conveys a greater sense of urgency than does the Majority Report. Several other members of the Committee also spoke on behalf of such a sense of urgency in the consensus-gathering meeting and would have preferred it.
Executive Summary

President Howard Swearengin and the Board of Fellows of Brown University established the Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education in 1985 to evaluate current programs and to make recommendations for new strategies for improving the climate of racial relations at the University. This report is the result of that process.

The pluralist ideal is the central theme of our report. We believe that ideal to be a characteristic of the American heritage and an ideal consistent with Brown's tradition of egalitarianism. Pluralism as a social condition is that state of affairs in which several distinct ethnic, religious, and racial communities live side by side, willing to affirm each other's dignity, ready to benefit from each other's experience, and quick to acknowledge each other's contributions to the common welfare. Pluralism is different from the contemporary concept of "diversity" in which individuals from various groups are merely present, just as it differs from the idea of "integration" in which minority individuals are asked, explicitly or implicitly, to abandon their cultural identity in order to merge into the majority community.

The Visiting Committee confronted the fact that racism is inherent in American society and therefore exists in the University community. Ironically, any great university today reflects both the ideal of racial justice and the experience of racism. This is the case at Brown, in spite of the fact that its traditions and practices are consciously directed toward active concern for racial justice. The task for Brown is to gather its energies and resources to deal with this situation. As a result of our analysis, the members of the Visiting Committee believe that it can and will.

Our goal is to help all students, but especially minority students, achieve academic success at the highest levels possible. We challenge minority students to accept and meet this goal. Some of our suggestions focus on strategies to increase the "comfort level" of minority students at Brown. Other recommendations look at the composition of the faculty, the content of the curriculum, and the academic support services provided by the University. These directions for the University are designed to strengthen the educational experience of Brown students of all races and cultures, striving to meet the objective in Brown's charter to produce graduates "duly qualified for discharging the offices of life with usefulness and reputation."

We urge that Brown institutionalize its commitment to the pluralist ideal, and to the improvement of race relations on campus. We recommend:

- that special support be given to faculty to rework existing courses and to create new courses with Third World and ethnic-related materials.

- that the University communicate more effectively to students the efforts already made to broaden course offerings to consider the cultures and heritage of American minority and Third World peoples.

- that the faculty give formal consideration to a graduation requirement in American ethnic or Third World Studies.

- that the faculty give formal consideration to establishing an Ethnic Studies concentration and an Ethnic Studies Research Institute.

- that each academic department, program, and center have one member with special responsibilities for recruitment of minority faculty.

- that a faculty seminar series in the humanities and social sciences be established to expand understanding of scholarly inquiry into the
interactions between majority and minority cultures in the United
States.

- that the Dean of the College designate one member of her staff to
monitor carefully the academic performance of minority students and
to direct those in academic trouble to appropriate resources.

- that each academic department, program and center designate one of
its members as an academic resources advisor.

- that the University appoint a dean with special responsibility for the
concerns of Latino students.

- that the University support and encourage all student groups that seek
to promote racial understanding.

- that the Third World Transition Program be continued, with more
administrative involvement. We encourage a significantly broader
mandate for TWTP.

- that an "ombudsman" position be created in the office of the Dean of
Student Life to advise minority students on all aspects of residential
life.

- that the University Council of Students take new initiatives to improve
inter-racial communication and inter-cultural exchange.

- that the University give new endorsement to the Racial Awareness
Communications Exchange program and other groups working to
improve race relations.

- that the Third World Center expand its role both to preserve the
cultural assets of minority groups and to share them with the
University community.

- that the President establish a formal mechanism for regular attention
to issues of race relations and issues affecting minority students.

- that the Corporation evaluate the University's progress toward these
goals at least triennially.

The Visiting Committee is optimistic about the successful implementation of these
recommendations because they are grounded in the views of many individuals and groups
within the Brown Community. This report reflects the broad-based democratic approach that
the Committee took to its task, listening to all sectors of the University and all sides of the
issues involved. We sought to demonstrate in our own work the pluralist ideal which we
believe should be at the heart of the University's activities.

The full realization of this ideal requires that all members of the Brown community
—students, faculty, alumni, and administration—accept with genuine enthusiasm the
recommendations we present in this report. Our message to students is to take full advantage
of the opportunities Brown offers you. Seek advice from faculty and administrators, suggest
course improvements, share your culture and heritage with others, and, above all, strive for the
highest level of academic achievement. Our message to faculty is to reach out to minority
students, encourage them, serve as mentors to them, and reflect in your own teaching and
scholarship the multi-cultural reality they represent.
Our message to minority alumni is to take "ownership" in the University, participate in
campus activities, work with today's undergraduates, and help them achieve success in their
studies and in their careers. Our message to the administration is to increase dramatically the
level of communication to minimize misconceptions and to facilitate the evolution of the culture
of the institution toward the pluralist ideal.

Our message to all members of the Brown community is that progress requires positive
action demonstrating openness, trust, and goodwill on the part of all individuals of all racial
groups in all sectors of the University.

Brown's current problems are, in part, a function of its progress. By taking an aggressive
interest in addressing racial inequities, by working hard to achieve the degree of diversity
which now exists in its student body, and by committing ample resources to the development
of its multi-cultural potential, the University has raised expectations and opened new levels of
discussion about what Brown ought to be.

The existence of the Visiting Committee illustrates the point. The President and the
Board of Fellows invited this critique, and we have obliged. We have admired the open,
candid, and sharing attitudes encountered as we went about our inquiry. There have been
serious issues at stake in our examination of the quality of minority life and education at Brown,
none of them more important that the question of whether the ideal of pluralism can find
working expression in a university so deeply grounded in the traditions of white America. We
are encouraged by the fact that Brown, through its leaders, has been willing to entertain the
challenge. We look forward now to seeing a great university rise to meet it.
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pluralism in the Curriculum

Many of its minority students perceive Brown as an institution of the white majority, in spite of the University's successes in increasing minority enrollment. Why the persistent impression? A look at the situation of Latino students at Brown will serve as an example. It is true that the percentage of minority students admitted to the freshman class has been rising—from 16% to 19.3% in the four classes now enrolled. But Latino students remain a handful of the total, and significantly fewer Latinos than other students can look forward to graduating with their class.

Yet Latino young people comprise ten percent of the college age population, and the growth of the several Latino communities in the United States has been so rapid that, by early in the next century, Latinos will be the country's largest minority group. No wonder, then, that many Latino students express feelings of isolation in the midst of this largely white and generally prosperous university community.

Compound the problem of small numbers and limited resources with a curriculum that offers few courses on Latino cultures in the United States, and it is not surprising that Latino voices on campus call for "a more representative curriculum." They also observe that students may graduate from Brown with concentrations in history or the social sciences and never have to be exposed to any courses dealing with the peoples and cultures of Latin America, Africa, or Asia.

Pluralism begins with the curriculum. By what it elects to include in the research it supports and the courses it offers, a university implies something about what is worth knowing. A Latino student at Brown could easily conclude from examining the present Brown curriculum that his or her culture was not worthy of serious attention.

What that student might miss is the fact that Brown has already accepted the obligation to modify its curriculum, to take better account of the world's developing nations, and to give better attention to the domestic history of racial groups in the United States. The University's Council for International Studies has been pivotal in encouraging and shaping the "internationalization" of the Brown curriculum. In addition, the Foreign Study Office has already developed overseas programs in a half dozen or more Third World countries. In addition, Brown has a long-standing Afro-American Studies program and a nationally recognized Afro-American drama and dance program, "Rites and Reasons."

There is more than a little irony in the fact that so many efforts at developing a genuinely pluralistic curriculum stand cheek by jowl with so many perceptions that the curriculum is monochromatic and Eurocentric. Perhaps the conflict can be eased by clearer communication of what already exists, but finally it can only be solved by a more pervasive shift in faculty attitudes about what is essential to becoming an educated person.

Any consensus on this question will be elusive at Brown, if for no other reason than its commitment to an unstructured curriculum. It is an article of faith among the Brown faculty that structured requirements for the diploma should be minimal. In the absence of distribution requirements or a core curriculum, the "essentials" are defined by departments, each of which sets its requirements for a student concentrating in the department. Such dispersed authority over the content of the curriculum will make it difficult for Brown to speak with a coherent and discernible voice on the obligation of a university to accommodate its curriculum to the needs presented by the ideal of
pluralism. Yet it is the Visiting Committee's conviction that it must do so, if it is to fulfill the obligation of a university to society, and to its students, and to the pool of human knowledge.

Recommendations Concerning the Curriculum

A. Since 1981, the Dean of the College has offered incentive grants to faculty and graduate students for the creation of courses which deal with multi-ethnic and non-western cultural diversity. **Special support should now be given to interested members of the faculty to rework existing courses to include more ethnic-related materials.** We recommend that such support should also be used to increase the number of departmental courses which focus on the experience and heritage of United States minority groups.

Recognizing that it takes time and research to uncover, examine, and integrate new materials, this support could take a number of forms, including grants for summer study, temporary reduction in teaching obligations, and research grant support. The attendant costs might be met in part by reallocation of existing funds and in part by attracting new outside funding to this important curricular purpose. There are models for such efforts at Brown and at other institutions that have recently undertaken projects to develop women's studies and certain area studies; one example is the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women.

B. **We recommend that the University give greater emphasis to existing attention to ethnic concerns in the curriculum.** Many professors are doing more to include such areas of interest in their courses than students give them credit for doing. A well-circulated brochure would help clarify the resources already in place, as would specifically identified attention to this concern in the course announcement bulletin and other publications of the University.

C. **We recommend that the faculty give formal consideration to a graduation requirement in ethnic or Third World studies.** Other colleges and universities have installed such a requirement out of the conviction that the contemporary definition of an educated person must include at least minimal awareness of multi-cultural reality. At Brown, students could meet this requirement through existing courses or programs in the curriculum.

D. **We recommend that the faculty give formal consideration to establishing an Ethnic Studies concentration.** We have previously noted the need for a greater number of courses which explore the culture and heritage of American minority communities and their contributions to the overall American experience. Ethnic Studies, like other area studies concentrations, offers a special way of penetrating the whole human experience in a manner appropriate to the liberal arts inquiry. An Ethnic Studies concentration would allow a student to explore neglected or understated facets of our pluralistic culture. Examples include study of the Black church, Asian immigrant communities (both past and current), the struggle of Native Americans against the westward migration of American whites, and re-examination of "melting pot" theories of American cultural development. This recommendation relates also to Recommendation B under the next section of the report.
Pluralism in the Faculty

There is an urgent need to increase the number of Black, Asian American, and Latino members of the Brown faculty. That need is widely subscribed to in the abstract but minimally attended to in the concrete.

The reasons for such urgency are worth rehearsing.

- There is at least some correlation between the complexion of the faculty and the content of the curriculum. Without falling into the categorical trap of assuming that only Black English professors can teach Black literature and only Asians can teach about the politics of Pacific Rim countries, it remains true that a faculty is more likely to attend to some of the blank spaces in its course offerings and its presumptions if it is heavily laced with minority membership.

- A university with but a very few minority faculty members signals its minority students that academic careers are not for them; the shortage becomes self-replicating. It also inadvertently signals its white student body that there may be some truth in the social prejudice which assumes that most minority persons are intellectually inferior to whites.

- As for students, so also for faculty members—minimum numbers create maximum isolation. Being one of a very few gives minority professors a greater than ordinary burden of proving that they are the intellectual equals of their white colleagues. In addition, questions of fair treatment in promotion and the other rewards of university life come under closer scrutiny when one is an exception to the ethnic rule. That, in turn, exacerbates the sense of marginality among minority faculty.

- There is an inclination among many minority students to think that advice and counsel can only—or at least best—be given by minority members of the faculty. A disproportionately small number of such faculty members are then under the pressure of a disproportionately large number of students seeking their attention and using their time.

In 1982-83, a faculty committee was appointed to deal with the development of new resources for the hiring of minority faculty. Its final report included a number of imaginative recommendations to the President and the faculty. In 1985, in response to student protests, the President and the Provost made a commitment to appoint fifteen new minority members of the faculty over the next five years; the first results are three additional minority faculty hired for 1986-87. The Administration has also agreed to a temporary increase in the number of approved positions in departments which succeed in attracting minority professors whose specialization may not match the exact staffing requirements of the department. This rather aggressive policy of the administration has not yet been matched by a similarly aggressive attempt at recruitment on the part of the departments.

One of the difficulties with minority hiring is the small number of minority students pursuing graduate programs in academic subjects. Brown's response to this issue is to increase the number of Black, Latino, and Asian students entering academic careers. The Graduate School, therefore, has established a fellowship program to support four Brown minority graduates annually to continue their education at the University. As a short-term response to the need for increasing the minority faculty presence on campus, the University has established the Inman Page Scholars Program to bring minority faculty from other institutions as visitors to lecture and meet with current undergraduates.
Recommendations Concerning the Faculty

A. We recommend that the Provost and Dean of the Faculty identify one member of each academic department, program, and center to take special concern for minority recruitment. This representative should have responsibility for:

- developing a list of minority resources to which the department can turn when a post falls open,
- establishing a regular means of reporting to and consulting with the Provost and Dean of the Faculty on the progress of departmental efforts to identify minority candidates,
- cultivating relationships with minority persons working in the department's field at other colleges and universities or in non-academic activities, and
- encouraging continued faculty exchanges of the sort that Brown has established with Tougaloo College and with other historically Black colleges and universities.

B. We recommend that the faculty give formal consideration to establishing an Ethnic Studies Research Institute. Brown has a singular opportunity among East Coast universities to build a reputation for such research. No other Ivy League institution that we know of has gone beyond the establishment of an Afro-American Studies program or department, and our work with these issues suggests the need for a much broader base of academic resources in this area. While Brown will obviously be the beneficiary of such an Institute, Brown can also provide a real service to other colleges and universities. We envision a modest beginning with the appointment of a senior scholar to direct research efforts, to help Brown seek the funds necessary to improve and expand research opportunities, and to plan a series of activities throughout the year which will bring prominent scholars to the Brown campus for lectures, colloquia, and temporary teaching.

C. In order to facilitate substantive scholarly interaction between minority and other faculty members, we recommend the establishment of a faculty seminar series in the humanities and social sciences. While not designed to address topics of interest to the minority communities exclusively, the series should give prominent attention—and resources—to minority issues. A small interdepartmental planning group could readily mount a most useful series of four to eight meetings annually, inviting faculty members to present current research which has bearing on the pluralist experience and which would give members of the seminar an expanded understanding of the range of scholarly possibilities for inquiry into the interaction between majority and minority cultures in the United States. This aspect of the human enterprise has many scholarly veins that are yet to be mined.

Academic Support Programs

Of all the problems encountered by minority students, academic problems are the most difficult to discuss openly. The issue is sensitive. In spite of the fact that many minority students do exceedingly well in their academic pursuits, and others track the norms of the majority population, some bring with them to the university level a weight of educational deficits. For those disposed to a racist interpretation of their world, this gives credence to the stereotype that minority students are intellectually inferior performers. The caricature is applied more frequently to Black and Latino than to
Asian students, but all suffer in some degree. Thus, attention sought by or given to poorly performing minority students is likely to lend support to that prejudicial view.

Notwithstanding the sensitivity that may exist on this issue, it remains the case that many minority students need to pay attention to gaps and weaknesses in their educational background in order to make the fullest use of their educational opportunities and to develop to the fullest degree their own intellectual potential. It will not do for any group of minority students to allow weak preparation or lowered societal expectations to define falsely their present capacity or their future promise. Students who have the need for specific help in shoring up their scholarly resources must be encouraged to acknowledge those needs without apology, and the University must supply appropriate means to provide that help.

The academic performance of minority students is the most critical element in their adjustment to university life. By its recruitment and admissions activity, Brown invites these students to participate in an intellectually rigorous environment and to take from their experience some well-honed skills and critical abilities. They are urged to fashion at Brown a larger vision of their own and of human life. We hope that Brown will agree that effective efforts must be put forward to eliminate conditions which contribute to the academic insecurity of minority students and which prevent them from graduating at the same rate as other undergraduates.

Our goal of pluralism in the university community is predicted on mutual understanding and respect; thus efforts to eliminate discrepancies in educational attainment constitute logical steps in the right direction. The end being sought, after all, is academic success in transit and an educational experience for minority students which is as fulfilling intellectually and personally as the educational experience of successful majority students.

Recommendations Concerning Academic Support Programs

A. We applaud the development of the Writing Center and the Math Center, designed to serve all students who want to improve their writing or mathematical skills. We recommend the expansion of these "skills stations" to other locations, especially strategic places where student access could be increased, such as department areas, residence halls, Faunce House, and the Third World Center. The keys to success for such a network are high quality training of the staff of these centers, skillful monitoring of the graduate students who carry the teaching responsibilities there, and a willingness on the part of the faculty to identify students who most need the help and to require them to use it effectively.

B. We recommend that the Dean of the College designate one member of her staff to monitor the academic performance of minority students and to direct those in academic trouble to appropriate resources. We hope that the person appointed would be the kind of academic administrator with whom students would feel free to discuss any difficulty they are having, whether the problem is academic or attitudinal. To be effective, this dean must be the kind of person who will inspire students to accept academic challenges with confidence and resolve. We have learned in our conversations with students that they are keenly alert to the attitudes, sensitivities, and accessibility of the administrators with whom they now work.

C. The academic department is the point at which students meet both the opportunities and the challenges of a university education. The department is also the place where students are most likely to benefit from the alert monitoring of their
academic progress by an academic mentor. Therefore, we recommend that each academic department, program, and center designate one of its members as an academic resources advisor to become aware of the University's facilities for the academic support of its students.

While this advisor's responsibility would extend to all students working with departmental colleagues, we believe that he or she should be selected on the basis of demonstrated sensitivity to minority students and effectiveness in relating to them. We would expect the advisor to take steps early in the year to establish rapport with minority students enrolled in the department's courses or majoring in the field, putting them in touch with the professors or graduate students who might be particularly helpful to them, and in other ways encouraging them in the pursuit of their studies.

Such an advisor would also be in a particularly good position to encourage some of the ablest minority students to consider careers in research and teaching. We believe that the Third World Center could be also used to great advantage by departmental advisors.

D. With Latino students experiencing the kind of isolation mentioned earlier in this report, we recommend that the University establish the position of assistant or associate dean in the office of the Dean of the College, a post designed to focus special attention on academic and other forms of support for Latino students. We are pleased that the University has already taken action on this goal and has begun a national search for this position.

The Quality of Residential Life for Minority Students

Pluralism and separatism are contrary concepts of group relationships within a community. Thus, those elements of residential life which make separateness an article of faith or an unshakable social habit run counter to the main thrust of the philosophy of the Visiting Committee in addressing its task.

There are, however, forms of association which serve as positive social and psychological supports for young people, which can sustain and even advance the pluralist ideal. In our opinion, the quality of residential life for many minority students is certainly enhanced by some of these groupings, among which we would mention the Third World Center, the Third World Transition Program, and the several ethnically defined student associations.

All such groups face the temptation to define themselves in terms of protected "turf" and to present an exclusivist face to the community outside. There are many ways to counter that temptation, especially through programming efforts to extend themselves hospitably to the larger Brown undergraduate body. We are convinced of the importance of such efforts and would hope that the administrators and faculty members most closely associated with these support groups will help to keep such efforts on the agenda.

There are problematical elements of residential life, some of which have adversely affected the experience of minority students. Some of these problems lie in the realm of perception. One of these is the mistrust that has developed between elements of the minority student community and the Office of Policy and Security. The second is the perception of Latino students that they have no ethnically sympathetic ear in the Psychological Services office. Yet another is the cluster of concerns and criticisms which tend to gather around the Third World Transition Program.
A second set of problems relates to racial harassment. Racially motivated incidents of harassment have occurred in Wriston Quadrangle, a major crossroads of the campus. University responses have included extensive investigations, disciplinary actions, and consciousness-raising seminars. Regardless of the effectiveness of these approaches, the sting of such incidents remains in the memory of many undergraduates.

Athletics seems to be one area of student life in which minority concerns are not pressing issues. Although there have been complaints of unfair treatment in the past, we found that athletics is an aspect of the University in which minority students, male and female, find fulfillment. We hope that Brown will continue a concerted effort to ensure minority representation among coaches, athletic administration, and alumni participation.

The Third World Transition Program to which all minority students are invited is a two-and-one-half day program preceding the regular freshman orientation program. Some white students consider that the advance arrival of minority students puts those students in an unfairly advantageous position. Some students also complain that early friendships among minority students in the class tend to preclude easy and natural affiliations developing across racial lines.

Recommendations Concerning the Quality of Residential Life

A. The University administration has been and must continue to be forceful in its condemnation of intimidating and harassing behavior, and in its disciplining of the students responsible. Condemnation and punishment, however necessary, are no substitute for more innovative actions to help all students understand how barbaric and infantile such harassment really is. Several student groups—Racial Awareness Communications Exchange, Spectrum, Black/Jewish Dialogue, and residential and non-residential fraternities—are the leading student organizations with programs deliberately reaching across the boundaries of racial communities. The University needs to support all student groups which seek to promote racial understanding, publicly condemning those who mount such programs and finding new ways to cultivate inter-group relationships of a positive sort.

B. The Third World Transition Program is seen by its participants and others as a valuable orienting experience. We believe there is warrant for continuing TWTP, although some appropriate changes would be beneficial. Without wanting to offer detailed prescriptions for dealing with the disputes that have grown up around the program, we recommend that the University take a more active role in shaping and directing the program. The Dean of the College, under whose aegis the program exists, needs to take a more direct hand in shaping the policies and administrative patterns which will guide the program.

The Program also needs to have more clearly articulated goals. We commend the program for enabling students to deal with the realities of life on a predominantly white university campus. We believe, however, that the program should do more to engage minority students in the fullest range of possibilities for personal development which the University offers. A broader mandate for the program should include such goals as enlisting students in projects designed to improve race relations in the University and encouraging minority students to participate in student government, publications, and other extra-curricular activities in the broader campus community.
Finally, we believe that those responsible for the program must pay attention to the confusion that the term, Third World Transition Program, can create in the minds of the uninitiated students, their parents, and others trying to decipher the social code of the University. Whether by its title or by its description, the program must convey its purposes clearly to those whom it hopes to have as participants.

In the interest of fairness, the complaints about advantages falling to Third World Transition Program students by virtue of their early arrival on campus should be assessed by the Dean of Student Life and the Dean of the College and, if legitimate, redressed.

C. Reports of insensitive treatment by security officers, whether true, false, or exaggerated, generate distrust among minority students which is very hard to relieve. It is entirely appropriate that the University has established an on-campus committee to review the security issue. We would also recommend that the University create an “ombudsman” in the office of the Dean of Student Life to serve as advisor to minority students on the full range of matters affecting the quality of their residential life at Brown. The ombudsman would handle security and other problems effectively as they arise; we believe that early and objective inquiries into these issues could diminish the need for elaborate investigations and the defensiveness they tend to spawn.

The Improvement of Race Relations at Brown

Begin with the promising anxiety of going off to a major and prestigious university. Add the normal uncertainties of being a late adolescent, the need for group identity and approval, and the myriad other forces at work for a freshman. Then complicate the picture with a racial and ethnic mix in one's residential experience which, for most students at least, is more cosmopolitan than anything they have lived with thus far. In such circumstances, it is easy to see why encounters between young people of diverse backgrounds can be threatening, perhaps especially for the minority student who has become habituated to dealing with constant small or gross reminders that racism is still a fact of American life.

It is not surprising, therefore, to witness young people at Brown looking at each other across psychological fences that are not of their own making. White students may feel excluded from casual contact with Black or Latino or Asian students who, when in their own ethnic company, may have different “in jokes,” different styles of relating to one another, even different modes of dress. Minority students in turn may feel self-conscious, conspicuous, uncertain of what is expected of them in an environment that must sometimes seem unrelievedly Aryan. Subtle and unintentional forces invite both minority and white students to drift toward a narrow range of safe and secure relationships. There is one difference between their separate experiences in this encounter with a multi-cultural environment, however, a difference that usually goes unnoticed by the majority. The white student can choose to ignore the question of race relations; the minority student cannot.

Race relations at a university as competitive as Brown are bound to be further complicated by perceived differences in the criteria applied by admissions officers in the selection of minority students. There are facts which get turned into “evidence.” Asian applicants turn in higher than average SAT's: Black and Latino applicants score lower, on average, than white students in both verbal and quantitative areas. Competent testimony on this phenomenon suggests that one reason for the difference is the internalization by Black and Latino students of societal images and expectations. Another reason is certainly that SAT's test, among other things, one's ability to take tests successfully. Why, then, should it be a surprise to find minority students departing from white
norms, when the quality of their secondary schooling has typically lagged behind the norms for white students?

In fact, admissions standards are never hard and fast, and admissions officers are the first to acknowledge that subjective judgments are and must be made in the effort to meet broad objectives of balance in an incoming class. There are geographic, alumni, athletic, vocational, and a host of other considerations to be taken into account along with the question of ethnic balance. Yet discussion of such things can turn sour, with whites believing that admissions standards have been unevenly and unfairly applied and minority students suspecting the worst about themselves. All these things can hamper the development of relaxed and natural student-to-student relationships across racial lines.

Another complicating factor is what we can refer to as the "security index." Minority students tend to view white students as more secure than themselves, less interested in minority cultures, more at home in the well-established campus organizations and activities, and in general more at ease in dealing with the social and academic intricacies of Brown University. White students, on the other hand, are generally not schooled to think of themselves as the home team, at an advantage by being on their own turf. They may respond to the complexities of race relations by assuming that most minority students want only limited association with whites, that most minority students are militant about issues of race, and that militancy and separation go hand in hand.

In fact, militancy may be, for some, an answer to their dilemma. Although it sometimes becomes a costly substitute for attention to academic progress, a militant, outspoken affirmation of one's own background and culture can have a very positive effect on one's "security index." There are occasions, too, when a militant stance is the only reasonable political response to gross inequalities in institutional life; American history is full of examples. Yet militancy can also drive an unseen wedge between ethnic groups, since a loud "yea" for one group's identity may sound like a "nay" for another's. It can also be heard by a less outspoken, more freewheeling minority student as an unwelcome call to separatism.

There are no easy answers to these problems of perception. The best remedy, of course, is sustained individual and group contact, and the cultivation of personal friendships which allow people to cross boundaries and move beyond inter-racial wariness and suspicion. In fact such contact does happen, and not infrequently. When it happens, both the individual and the University are well served.

We realize, of course, that contact can make for friction, that some individuals who come to know one another better may end by liking each other less. But these risks are at least risks inherent in any earnest human endeavor, and it seems far better to hazard them than to live by stereotypes.

What we have described above is a set of intricate, complicated issues that affect the development of positive relationships among students on Brown's campus. Our recommendations to improve those relationships must address the problem of student-to-student communication. It is true that the University context and atmosphere will affect the quality of the relationships to be developed; in the final analysis, it is the effort that students themselves are willing to put forth that will make the difference.

Recommendations for Improving Race Relations at Brown

A. We believe there is some responsibility for improving race relations that ought to be borne by students, and that students need to consider the appropriate structure for meeting this responsibility. Therefore, we recommend that the University Council of Students take new initiatives in the area of race relations. We suggest, for example, that the UCS embark on new efforts to recruit minority
students into the ranks of its leadership. We also ask that it consider a committee of students with a diverse membership which would meet regularly to discuss and implement improvements in inter-racial communication and occasions for inter-cultural exchange. An option to consider might be an all-college weekend to celebrate the pluralism that already exists at Brown, including social activities and cultural presentations. This committee should take particular pains to focus on the creation of more face-to-face dialogue and actual inter-group experiences.

B. The Racial Awareness Communication Exchange program, now in place for many years, should be given new endorsement by the University administration, as well as by the many student organizations that could employ its resources and benefit from its experience. We think particularly highly of its potential for the freshman orientation program and for continuing contributions to the residence hall programs of the freshman year.

C. We appreciate and commend the positive role played by the Third World Center in the life of the campus. It has provided support, services, and cultural and social events that have made Brown a more congenial place both for those persons interested in pursuing ethnic-related activity and those minority students who need the positive reinforcement provided by ethnic association. We believe that the Center must now carve out for itself an additional role in the University, putting its energies into new and creative programming designed both to preserve the cultural assets of minority groups and to share them with the University community. We have no doubt that a commitment to improving race relations at Brown already exists in the directorate of the Third World Center and in the student leadership of the Third World Coalition. We recommend that this commitment now be given high priority in their activities.

D. In order for the President and his executive officers to be spared the need to spend disproportionate amounts of their time and energy in response to periodic crises in race relations, we recommend that the President establish a means for ensuring that he and his senior administration focus attention regularly on questions affecting the tone of race relations and the issues affecting minority students.

We suggest two possible means for accomplishing this goal. The President might ask an administrative officer in whom he and his executive staff have high confidence to report on these issues at least quarterly. A second option is to restructure and elevate the on-campus committee paralleling Corporation Committee on Minority Affairs, to be presided over by the Provost and to include faculty members and administrators from pertinent offices of the University. For such a committee to be useful, its impressions need to be current and its information accurate. It, too, would need to meet and report at least quarterly. Whatever means the President might choose, the primary aim would be to ensure that minority members of the University community would know that they have a ready and established channel for their concerns to be heard at the highest levels of the institution.

In the middle levels of the University's administrative structure are a number of individuals—deans, chaplains, psychological counselors, and others—who are in daily touch with the persons and the issues that determine the climate of race relations at Brown. Much of the tension and drama of campus crises in race relations could be eliminated if these middle-level administrators are empowered to deal with
such problems. We urge that the intelligence, commitment, and insight of these individuals be engaged in the policy process and that these administrators be given the instruction, responsibility, and authority to represent the University effectively in these issues.

E. Recognizing that the good will of students needs to be endorsed and provided continuity by the structures of the institution, we commend the work of the Brown Corporation's Committee on Minority Affairs. **We urge this Committee to draw the attention of the governing councils of the University to the issues of minority life and education on a regular and continuing basis.** We further recommend that the Committee devise a simple and straightforward plan for achieving outside and objective evaluation of the progress of the University on our recommendations at least triennially.
EPILOGUE

A great university is an extraordinarily complex reality. The nature of its enterprise is such that it will always be a compound of highly individualistic effort and intricately woven community experiences. Its mission is discovery, its mode is creativity, and its standard is excellence, all of them categories that transcend race.

The questions we were asked to address are such that the bulk of our attention has been given to community concerns, concerns which condition the matrix within which discovery takes place, creativity is exercised, and excellence is achieved.

Our issues have been complex, just as the University is complex. Their resolution will require continued and effective communication of values and standards by the University’s administration. Their resolution will also benefit from the understanding and endorsement of the alumni body, whose influence continues to be an important factor in shaping the perception of the University in the world at large. Perhaps more than anything else, however, the resolution of these issues will depend on the degree to which the faculty of Brown University embraces the pluralist ideal as its own; not as official policy only, but as felt conviction.

However much our attention may have been focused on corporate realities, we recognize that a great university has its final fulfillment in the cultivation of an appetite for excellence in each of its students. Such an appetite may be suppressed by racism, but it can never be erased in the student whose university lives up to its vocation.

One of our members observed early in this process that Brown’s problems are, in part, a function of its progress. By taking an aggressive interest in addressing racial inequities, by working hard to achieve the degree of diversity which now exists in its student body, and by committing many resources to the development of its multi-cultural potential, Brown has raised expectations and opened up new levels of discussion about what ought to be.

The existence of our Visiting Committee illustrates the point. The President and the Board of Fellows have invited this critique and we have obliged. But our report would be incomplete if it did not record our admiration for the open, candid, and sharing attitudes we encountered as we went about our inquiry. There have been serious issues at stake in our examination of the quality of minority life and education at Brown, none more important than the question of whether the ideal of pluralism can find working expression in a university so deeply grounded in the traditions of white America. We are encouraged by the fact that Brown, through its leaders, has been willing to entertain the challenge. We look forward now to seeing a great university rise to meet it.
THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AND THE PLURALIST IMPERATIVE

MINORITY REPORT

OF THE

VISITING COMMITTEE ON MINORITY LIFE AND EDUCATION AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

BROWN UNIVERSITY

MAY, 1986

SUBMITTED BY

LERONE BENNETT JR.
BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

I was an early and enthusiastic advocate of concrete pluralism, and I wholeheartedly endorse that part of the Majority Report.

I have major problems, however, with the factual and conceptual foundations of that document. I take particular exception to the language and recommendations on the term Third World and the slighting references to militancy and Black Studies.

I believe, moreover, that the apologetic tone of the Majority Report distorts the pluralist imperative, which I discussed in a memorandum on the Brown dilemma.

I maintained in that memorandum that Brown University's problems are reflections of structural problems in higher education and American society. It can be argued, I said--and the Majority Report quoted only one side of my argument—that Brown's problems are a function of progress. For in some areas and on some levels Brown has made more progress than many, perhaps most, predominantly White institutions of higher learning. But progress brought new and, in some cases, more acute problems. The new demands of the students could not be met without structural and institutional reforms. They could not be met without dealing seriously with traditional perceptions and traditional definitions of education, diversity, and integration.

The Majority Report does not explain how and why this situation developed. Nor does it deal with the paradox of "progress." For it can be argued that the more racial "progress" you make (using traditional definitions), the more "problems" you are going to have. In other words, the more Asian, Latino and Black students you admit, the more you talk about diversity while maintaining a Eurocentric curriculum and environment, the more problems you are going to have with concrete diversity.

We can make the same point from the other side. For if you go out of your way to meet the expressed demands of Third World students, aren't you, as some ask, increasing the very separation and demarcation you want to eliminate? Here again we confront the dilemma (according to traditional definitions), which should be redefined and raised to a new level. For contrary to the statements in the Majority Report, we are dealing here with an effect, not a cause. The causal factor is that the Brown world is a de facto White world (in terms of power, orientation, staffing). How do you get out of that dilemma? That's the question.
The New Racial Frontier

Brown University finds itself, because of the very progress it has made, on the frontier of race and higher education in America. Because of its history and its stress on diversity, Brown is facing the inevitable and necessary problem of dealing with and defining the requirements of the next phase of desegregation, which is concrete pluralism.

This is a new challenge, a new process, a new stage. It is a frontier process, and it is impossible to cite one-two-three recipes. The answers will come out of the process, honestly and painfully faced. I believe, with the University Chaplain, that this is inevitable, necessary, and healthy. It is part of the educational process. It is part of the painful process of learning how to teach and learn and live in an age that is no longer dominated by the idea that the world is of, for and about White people.

We are not sketching here a theory of demonology. The only thing we are saying is that this is such a basic way of looking at the world that it is difficult for anyone raised in this culture to transcend it and look at it critically and analytically. This is not a peculiar failing of Brown University. For Brown and other predominantly White universities exist in a society organized around that idea. Hence, another dilemma. Can a university transcend its societal setting? There are indications that Brown can meet the elementary demands of the first phase of desegregation. The question is whether Brown can meet the new demands of Third World students, demands that raise the question of real pluralism, real diversity, and real integration.

Problems of Perception and Definition

To understand this challenge, it is necessary to look briefly at the history of race and higher education in America. For the American (and Brown) venture in higher education began not in equality, but in inequality. In the beginning, and for a long time afterwards, the university was closed to Blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics and women (Black and White). The history of higher education in America is a history of a gradual and painful widening of the circle (in response to protests and changing world conditions) and a gradual and painful democratization of the educational process. And from this standpoint we can say that one of the most important advances in the history of the American university (for Blacks, Latinos, Whites and women) came in the sixties and seventies not because of a deeper understanding of educational theory but because of social movements led by (or inspired by) Black adults and Black students. It is scarcely possible to say anything real or meaningful about the education of Black or White folk without an understanding of this dynamic.

This unfolding process has created new problems, including problems of perception and definition.

A. The Problem of Perception

The dominant view of the University Administration is that Brown has made good progress in good faith. The dominant view of the Third World students is that the University has made little progress and is acting in bad faith. The dominant view of the University power structure is that Brown is a liberal university committed to diversity. The dominant view of the Third World Community is that Brown is a White university which gives lip service to diversity.

These are not monolithic positions. There are individuals in the governing structure and in the Third World Community with divergent views. Some, perhaps most, Third World students say the University has made some progress. But most Third World students say progress has exposed the limits of liberal rhetoric. They contend, in general, that you teach not by teaching but by doing and being. They say that the University curriculum is the university and that the university is what it believes.

The perception of some university authorities, on the other hand, is that Brown has made more progress in race relations than other predominantly White institutions and that some student demands are separatist.
There is thus a fundamental difference in the perception of Brown reality. The first task, a task that the Majority Report evade, is to define what people see. The second task, also neglected by the Majority Report, is to deal with:

B. The Problem of Definition

Brown University authorities and Brown University students are not talking about the same thing; they are not even speaking the same language. There are, in essence, two conflicting definitions of the problem. One is based on the old ethos of individualism, the other is based on a new and largely undefined definition of pluralism. And it is not possible to make further progress in this environment until the terms are defined and understood. One of the major problems I have with the Majority Report is its failure to define integration, pluralism, diversity, separation, militancy, racism and institutional racism. Because it refuses to define its terms, the Majority Report makes confusing statements, praising theoretical pluralism on one page and criticizing concrete pluralism on the next.

This is a frontier subject, and no individual has the truth -- certainly not the writer -- but the simple definition of pluralism in Webster's provides a basis for discussion: "A state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional cultural or special interests within the confines of a common civilization." In other words, Jews, Blacks, Latinos and Asians remain Jews, Blacks, Latinos and Asians if they want to, but they become Americans or abstract Brown individuals when they leave theirprivate worlds and group cultural enclaves and participate in the hard work which is necessary for the creation of a new community which will be defined not by whiteness, not by blackness, not by brownness, but by blackness - whiteness - brownness.

Part of the problem here is the traditional liberal view that individuals come to Brown and swim as individuals in the "mainstream" (a term some Blacks and Whites use without grappling with the implications of their semantic and political commitment) with polite bows, from time to time, to the group experiences that shaped them. Many, perhaps most, Third World students are asking the University to deal with them as "group individuals" with a history and a vision that the University and America need in order to make a whole. And this raises dangerous questions about the meaning, definition and location of the "mainstream," and the meaning of education in a multicultural society.

There is nothing radical or separatist about this position. For Brown and other predominantly White universities assume, as a basic starting point, that White individuals will come to the campus with a White group point of view which is reflected in the staffing, in the content of the courses, and in the very air that students breathe.

The problem on one level is to define the definitions.

The problem on another level is to change the environment that teaches the students and the teachers.

I am in general agreement with all recommendations of the Majority Report except those relating to the Third World, but I believe, in opposition to the Majority Report, that it is necessary to go beyond a shopping list of recommendations and emphasize priorities.

The first task is a University-wide dialogue on the meaning of concrete pluralism.

The second task is a University-wide commitment, backed up by the trustees, the administration, the faculty and the student body, to concrete pluralism (in the makeup of the student body, the University power structure and the faculty, and the orientation of the curriculum).

This will require a reassessment of what it means to study, teach and learn in a pluralistic world where the overwhelming majority of the people are colored.
Beyond all that, there should be concrete goals, a timetable and periodic reports on progress.

CRITIQUE OF THE MAJORITY REPORT

I. The Majority Report begs the question and assumes in some cases the point of view of the University.

Some statements in the Majority Report are not justified by the evidence, and others beg the question by assuming the truth of points that are still at issue. In some cases, phrases and sentences have been lifted bodily from the University Position Paper (see Appendix 2).

In a critique of the draft, I offered several examples of the apologetic tone:

"On page 4 (now pages 3 and 4), the Report says six times that the task facing the University is difficult. On page 6, the Report uses the word difficult two times and speaks on a third occasion of the 'inordinately difficult task.' (The new draft substitutes synonyms for some of the disputed words.) We are told on page 7 that 'consensus on this task will be elusive.' On page 11, the Report says 'the feasibility of establishing an Ethnic Studies concentration should be explored by a task force of the faculty....' I don't want to be difficult, but I don't think it's wise--or courageous--for a committee to recommend the appointment of another committee to explore the feasibility of action." Responding to my objections, the new Report adopts a more "militant" tone and recommends that the faculty give "formal consideration" to the feasibility of action.

It is worth noting here that President Swearer is more forthright in some of his comments. Consider, for example, his statement on minority faculty in "Race Relations at Brown":

While Brown has made solid, if modest, gains in the employment of minority--and especially Black--administrators over the last ten years, the record of non hospital-based minority faculty is disappointing. In 1973 the number of minority faculty was 38. That number declined to 30 in 1981 and returned to 38 in 1985. The number of Black faculty has gone from 17 in 1975 to 11 in 1981 and up to 13 in 1985....

In the same spirit, President Swearer addresses the Eurocentric bias charge in a memorandum to students, faculty; and staff (April 3, 1985):

As professors Gleason and Stultz have pointed out in their letter to the BDH, despite the emergence of Brown as a significant university in this century, we still inherit a certain provincialism from our past, which our curriculum no doubt still reflects. How often do we focus, in dealing with the human experience, on minority perspectives, or minority achievements, or minority views of history? Or to ask this question in another way, what is it that we either do or fail to do that continues to give members of our Third World community the uncomfortable sense that they are marginal to the dominant interests and activities of the University?

It is unfortunate that the Majority Report does not speak in the same tone.

The defensive tone of this Report was noted by other Committee members. In a letter to the drafting committee (April II, 1986), President George Ayers of Chicago State University said:

Throughout the Report, there are certain areas where the style of writing conveys a perception which might be interpreted differently. In addition, there are several places in the Report that convey a defensive tone. For example, on page eight, references to
the institutional racism (indicate that it) is a more difficult form to identify, diagnose, and rectify. I disagree with this section. I think there are many elements of institutional racism that are easy to identify and diagnose....*

**Pluralism in the Curriculum**

In this same connection, the section on "Pluralism in the Curriculum" repeatedly begs the question and ignores statements about the limitations of changes and complaints about the lack of material "on the culture and history of the African Diaspora." In this case, as in others, there are real questions about the factual foundations of a Report which ignores the core of the demands reported in "Section II Curriculum" of "Black and Third World Students Demands;" April 4, 1985:

Brown's curriculum continues to fail to encourage Third World and White students to take courses related to the Third World. Although much of this can be related to the low percentage of minority faculty and hence the low availability of courses taught from a Third World perspective, a significant deficiency can be found in the very structure of the Brown curriculum. To alleviate this deficiency we demand the following:

1) By 1989, four new faculty positions must be created, funded, and appointed to Afro-American Studies Program at least two of which will be in African History and culture and two in African-American history and culture.

2) While the council on International studies has planned to incorporate "non-western" perspectives into the curriculum, the culture and history of the African diaspora has been ignored. We demand at least one position in African history in the History Department, one position in African-American political thought in the Political Science Department, and one position in social stratification and oppression as they relate to African-Americans in the Sociology Department.

3) The President must impress upon department heads that Afro-American studies must be cross-registered in all university departments containing related disciplines (e.g., African history listed in the History Department.) The President shall reserve the right to indefinitely freeze the budget of those departments which refuse to allow reasonable cross-registration.

4) Since all of the required courses in the International Relations concentration are Eurocentric, it must require courses which focus on the Third World perspective. Specifically, at the very least, three new positions in IR should concentrate on African studies.

5) The Dean of the College must create a course that compares and contrasts the experiences of White and Third World women in the United States. This course must be one of those required of Women's Studies concentrators.

6) The President must set up a special student/faculty task force to evaluate the curriculum and recommend areas where beneficial changes can be made. This task force will consider, for example, creating a special themes and topics course that discusses racial issues and institutional racism. This committee must Report to the President and the faculty no later than March, 1986.

*Individuals quoted in this Report do not necessarily share my overall view of deficiencies of the Majority Report.
7) More efforts must be made to increase the foreign study opportunities that are acceptable at Brown for academic credit. CAS, with the advice of the minority members of the committee, must be especially open to accepting credit from universities in the Third World countries.

I was surprised, incidentally, that the Majority Report omitted the key documents detailing the student demands and the University response; I am therefore submitting these documents as part of this Minority Report.

Another significant document on the curriculum is the collection of statements from students and graduates on "the dynamics of teaching and learning at Brown". Here are three excerpts:

Minority Perspectives on the Curriculum

1. "I concentrate in one of the big social fields, a discipline which draws most of its data from surveys, and poses many of its arguments and generalizations in terms of statistics. This means that almost every social sciences generalization which is not actually "about" Third World peoples and communities, ignores them. No survey can afford to pay any meaningful amount of attention to so small a part of its data...."

"This is not an acceptable state of affairs for Third World students. I guess I communicated my feelings about this subject to one professor, because he turned around and said, probably trying to help, "if you want to know more about minority people, why don't you do a research project on them?" But is it really true that every time I want to learn about my people I have to go out and do ground breaking independent research on them? Surely the professor has some obligation to know about minority people as well as the majority -- to include them in his bibliographies, to discuss the implications of theory x or theory y for Black people, to recognize that we exist. At present, in most courses at Brown, minority people do not exist."

2. "It should be needless to say that the students who are really most deprived by this state of affairs are not the minority but the majority students. I don't need to get a Black perspective on narrative fiction (for example); they do."

3. "I know that most professors at least start out by teaching more or less what they themselves have been taught, so it's hard to blame them for not being completely up to date with everything that is going on in ethnic studies, as it relates to their field. But that is not true of major topics in major disciplines: for example, the Music Department should certainly include some courses that teach gospel music or jazz...."


It is encouraging to note that the new draft backs away from the erroneous statement that the University agreed to hire fifteen minority faculty members in response to the "imaginative recommendations" of a faculty committee. In fact, as I pointed out, and as the Majority Report now conceded, the University acted in response to student demands. But there are other assumptions anc statement of "fact" which require, at least, discussion. The first draft, for example, said that "the students' demands were well heard and understood." I objected, and the word well was deleted. But the statement is still inaccurate. For there is abundant evidence in this record of a failure to understand and even resistance to understanding. More importantly, there is evidence of perplexity, frustration and even anger in the face of demands that go
beyond the traditional rhetoric of integration. We were repeatedly confronted with complaints about "Black separatism" and the fallacy of seeking a Black or Third World experience at Brown.

One member of the Visiting Committee concluded after speaking to different constituencies on three visits to the campus "that there is very little meaningful dialogue taking place among them. Faculty and Administration speak of 'overcommitted resources' and of the lack of understanding shown by students in manifest progress to date, and in ongoing efforts to improve areas, such as minority faculty recruiting and the 'internationalization' of the curriculum (See page 7 of the Majority Report)." He added: "This is not even contact. To begin with, it is never easy for students to understand and appreciate fiscal and other constraints within which the University must operate; it becomes even more difficult when language is indirect and vague. If one wants to achieve true dialogue with students, then one must stop striving to achieve virtuosity in language and seek, instead, an honest and open discourse. Such a discourse is not taking place at Brown University."

The Majority Report errs in failing to advance the cause of open, honest, and perhaps painful discourse.

III. The Majority Report is Marred in Several Instances by Inarticulate Conservative Premises

We can see this clearly if we look for a moment at the discussion of the Third World name (pages 1, 13, 14), militancy (page 15). and Black Studies (page 9).

The Third World

The Charge to the Visiting Committee said that "the term Third World is used frequently and in different ways at Brown. The Visiting Committee Members should become familiar with the usage."

If the discussion of the Third World name and concept is any indication, the Visiting Committee failed in this task. For the majority Report begins (page 1) by taking issue with the Third World concept and by "electing" to use the word minority. Some members of the Committee protested that decision and affirmed "the right of people," as the Charge said, "to choose their own descriptives."

"There are real reasons," I said in a memorandum of April 1, "why the students use the term Third World and why they are uncomfortable with the word minority."

In response to this and other objections, the second draft dropped the unwise recommendation "that the name of the (Third World Transition) program be changed to the simpler appellation, Minority Orientation Program." But the discussion of the term and the program is still quarrelsome and pejorative. In view of this record, I question the purpose and meaning of Recommendation B on pages 13 and 14. Who wants to "take a more active role in shaping and directing the program?" And for what purpose?

The problem here, I suspect, is not the name but the thing. "At Brown," Kristin Wells wrote in the Brown Daily Herald, September 13, 1985, "the term 'Third World' is used in a global context, linking all people of color together, as opposed to the term 'minority.' which carries with it many derogatory connotations in the U. S. and which is numerically valid only on a national level. The unity of the term 'Third World' also represents the common struggle of all people of color throughout the world against centuries of oppression. On a national level it also represents the crisis we face in trying to identify ourselves and the battle between our heritage and our American culture."

Here, as elsewhere, the Majority Report goes off on a tangent which raises questions about our understanding of the pluralist imperative. For the Third World name and program are not the problem. They are products of the problem or, better still, attempts to solve the problem.
Since there is so much controversy over the Third World concept, I have attached a publication of the Third World Center for informational purposes (Appendix 1).

Brown and the Pedagogy of Pluralism

There was surprising opposition to requests for the deletion of the following language (page9): “Without falling into the categorical trap of assuming that only Black English professors can teach Black literature ....” I argued for the deletion of the sentence for it “requires completion and serious discussion,” and added: “It would be necessary, for example, to say that a person who has not transcended the racism of American culture and who believes the world is of, for and about White people should not teach Black literature - or anything else. It would also require a serious discussion of the pedagogical needs of oppressed students (or students who believe that they are oppressed) and the pedagogical limitations of teachers linked in any way to structures of oppression.”

In a number of books and articles, I have maintained that “a teacher in a situation of oppression is either a liberator or an oppressor.” I would make the same point here, and I would quote DuBois (The Education of Black People) and Freire, not Disraeli. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which ought to be required reading for anyone who is worried about the academic performance of Black students and Third World students at Brown and other predominantly White institutions, Paulo Freire said: “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunate, and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors.” And what is required now is joint work by Blacks, Whites, Asians, male and female, to create a new pedagogy that will make concrete pluralism possible.

The Majority Report very properly challenges students to make the most of their opportunities, despite indifference, despite insensitivity, despite racism, despite everything. But it improperly ignores (on pages 11, 12) the context in which learning takes place. In fact, as any number of studies have shown (see Jacqueline Fleming, Blacks in College: A Comparative Study of Students' Success in Black and in White Institutions), the environment of predominantly White institutions - The White staff and White orientation, the lack of Black supporting models and images, and the absence of that climate of love and expectancy that makes historically Black institutions effective in educating Black youths - is partly responsible for the academic performance of minority students.

In a letter of March 17, 1986, Dr. Ayers made the same point:

The impediment of major significance to minority students, particularly those matriculating at a predominantly White college or university, is the institutional environment. The reputation attributed to the institution with respect to the treatment of minority students, and the presence of minority faculty, administrators, and staff affect the minority student’s academic success. Institutions which do a better job of increasing the visibility of minority faculty also do a better job of recruiting the enrolling Black students.

Historically, minority students on white campuses have been subjected to open hostility and exposed to racism in every segment of society which precludes their advancement, both in the arena of education and the world of employment. It is not surprising, then, to find minorities seeking access to higher education skeptical of many administrators, faculty and students who may manifest racist attitudes and behaviors.

An elitist or patronizing attitude accompanied by the relevant behaviors serve as obstacles in learning for minority students. Students are often perceived as being under-prepared, intellectually incapable of learning in the university setting at a level and pace traditionally expected, and with limited academic potential.
Most predominately white colleges and universities lack representation of minority staff who display a more sensitive understanding of the minority student's learning style and needs and who can serve as role models. It is interesting to note that the number of minorities on faculties in white institutions continues to be less than two percent, yet over sixty percent of the minority students enrolled in a college or university are enrolled in such institutions. Even where institutional diversity exists, pluralism may be lacking. What needs to take place on white campuses is the development of true pluralism toward the elimination of an educational environment that inhibits the free exchange of ideas, attitudes and values.

Militancy as a Psychological Complex

The draft of the Majority Report said, in so many words, that militancy is a psychological complex. I said, in objection, that the discussion was abstract and misleading, adding: "It does not define militancy, and it does not recognize that militancy, however defined, can, under certain circumstances, be an adequate political and educational - - response, and not a psychological coping mechanism." In response, the Majority Report concedes that militancy can be a "reasonable" political response. But what the Report gives with one hand it takes away with the other. In the final draft, militancy (which is still undefined) is a psychological coping mechanism and a distraction-" It sometimes becomes a costly substitute for attention to academic progress...." More to the point, it is a threat to minority students, for "It can also be heard by a less outspoken, more freewheeling minority student as an unwelcome call to separatism (my emphasis)." This is abstract, polemical, and misleading. For the question is not either/or; the question is both/and--it is a question of study and struggle against racism and miseducation. I would go further and say that for an oppressed person struggle is a form of education, perhaps the highest form of education.

It is hard to understand why there was such a rigid insistence on this language. For the paragraph doesn't really say anything, and the implicit definition of militancy - - militancy is saying "a loud 'yea' for one groups identity" - - is preposterous.

This paragraph throws a revealing light on the curious discussion of integration in higher education. In fact, as everyone knows and admits, court decisions in the fifties and student militancy in the sixties were major factors in the integration of institutions of higher learning. Why was there so much resistance to telling this elementary and essential truth?

The same apologetics inform the discussion of Brown's evolution. We are told of Brown's "aggressive interest in addressing racial inequities" and the "ample" resources it has committed to the struggle, but we are not told that militancy (the militancy of Blacks and Whites struggling in courtrooms and on city streets and college campuses) was a major factor in progress at Brown.

IV. The Majority Report Lacks a Sense of Urgency and a Sense of Priorities.

Several committee members argued against the presentation of a shopping list of recommendations. Perhaps the most incisive statement came from President Ayers:

"One of the areas that is lost in the current document which we discussed at length at the last meeting in Boston was listing the priorities among our recommendations. Currently it is difficult to ascertain which recommendations are priority. It seems to me that in the final draft we should dictate which recommendations are a priority and even add a time frame for expectation of the University to be responsive to them."

There are other problems. There is no mechanism for periodic reports on compliance. Nor is there the sense of urgency Dr. James P. Comer called for in a memorandum of January 27, 1986:

An outside group, with interest but less emotional involvement, can observe the functioning
and identify the processes and conditions that interfere or facilitate its goals. Such a group can make recommendations. To achieve institutional goals, a permanent assessment and change mechanism must operate internally. It must be centered around persons and programs most related to the central mission of the institution, and, therefore, would involve its most powerful people. At an academic institution, such a mechanism should involve a preponderance of faculty - - representative of all levels and disciplines. Those responsible for supporting the faculty - - administrators at all levels and others - - should be appropriately represented. And, of course, the educational consumer, the students should be represented.

A group should attempt to determine what is already being done to facilitate diversity and learning, what should be eliminated, modified or enlarged, how to communicate their findings, goals and strategies to all involved in the institutional enterprise and how to maintain an on-going, proactive program designed to promote diversity and learning.

There is no quick fix for the tensions and problems that develop in settings involving people from diverse backgrounds. But the price of excluding any particular group from the important enterprise of education is to weaken the most critical infrastructure of democracy. Promoting diversity must not be viewed as a painful, time-consuming bother which interferes with the central mission of higher education. In a multicultural society, in a multicultural world, diversity must be understood as a central issue in education and responded to with appropriate human and financial resources and enthusiasm.

V. The Majority Report is a Product of a Flawed Process.

The fifth and final reason for my opposition to parts of the majority Report is a sense of concern about the integrity of the process that produced the document. This problem surfaced early and was reflected in communications problems and delicate questions of definition and staffing. Some members, for example, said it was important for the Report to be drafted and written by members of the committee. After a long delay, a drafting committee was appointed; but neither the drafting committee nor the full committee debated the shape and content of the final Report. In fact, the final draft was sent to the printer without the knowledge and consent of the full committee and two of the three members of the drafting committee. There were questions about this procedure from several committee members, including members of the drafting committee. On April 16, I discussed my objections in a telephone conversation with the chairman and I was told, according to notes I made at the time, that the last draft was being sent to me. This was not done. On May 7 and 8, after the Report had been printed and distributed to some Brown University officials, members of the Committee received copies. This was a fundamental violation of the agreement that every member of the Committee would have a chance to read the Report and "sign off" on it.

Since my name was attached to a public document containing language I had repeatedly protested and criticized, I had no alternative except to protest this violation of equity. And it is important to note here that I did not ask the chairman or the committee to add language or change the shape of the draft. I didn't ask the committee to add language critical of White faculty; I asked it to delete language critical of Black Studies. I didn't ask for language expressing my views on the education of Third World people; I asked for the removal of language expressing conservative views on the miseducation of Third World people. I didn't ask for language attacking conservatives; I questioned language attacking militants.

Was this unreasonable? Or is more required? Have we reached a stage where we are expected as a matter of course to attack militancy and to endorse conservative shibboleths about the education of Black and Third World people? Are we required now to rewrite history and to abandon that Brown (and Morehouse and Howard) maxim which asks us to follow truth or even the scent of truth, wherever it leads?
Some individuals say it is necessary to endorse questionable language and questionable means for the sake of the pluralistic conclusion. I would say, in opposition, that some means are based on inarticulate premises that doom the end. I would say further that some means are, in and of themselves, contestations of the end and negations of the end. And we are invited to consider the words of Ralph Ellison who said, in another connection, that "the end is in the beginning and lies far ahead."
APPENDIX 3

History of Minorities at Brown University

The wholesome questioning of orthodoxy and a heterogeneous faculty and student body were deliberately built into Brown University from the very start. Founded in 1764 as the College of Rhode Island, Brown was the creature of the Baptist Church, a group held in generally low esteem by the other denominations. The Brown charter, a remarkable eighteenth century document, assured that "into this liberal and catholic institution shall never be admitted any religious tests...and that all members hereof shall forever enjoy full, free, absolute and uninterrupted liberty of conscience...and that youths of all religious denominations shall and may be freely admitted." In a setting such as colonial Rhode Island, notorious as a seething, bubbling cauldron of confusion and contention, the home of the disaffected and disenfranchised, Brown University could scarcely be orthodox or exclusive.

One wonders, though, if the founders truly understood the full dimensions of what they had started at Brown, with all their talk about liberty of conscience and religious diversity. Brown has never conformed to the stylized quiet picture of the pastoral, cloistered, classical institution that one often finds in the historical literature portraying early nineteenth century American higher education. Brown students were not merely diverse in their religious attitudes—some had no religious attitudes at all. Moreover, the students were a radically different social mixture than was the custom on many other college campuses. The sons of merchant princes studied in an easy harmony with the children of an aggressive and upwardly mobile middle class at colonial Brown. Both groups eventually had to contend with increasing numbers of poor boys who came to Providence like displaced persons from the embattled Massachusetts and Connecticut farms where life was hard, the families were large, and only the eldest sons stood a chance of inheriting enough land to scratch out a precarious living. As a group they rescued Brown from becoming just another safe anchorage for the incurably rich and well born, and extended the liberal intellectual vision of eighteenth century Baptists into a nineteenth century ante-bellum melting pot.

Brown's commitment to diversity has not been limited to the vigorous defense of the right to hold heterodox and eccentric ideas or to the accommodation of the young men of the emergent middle class in the early nineteenth century. In 1869, The College enrolled its first two Black students, Inman Page and George Washington Milford. Thus began a long and honorable commitment to keep the college open to all, regardless of race as well as religion. A special University publication described Page and the early graduates of Brown:

Though born into slavery on a Virginia plantation in 1853, Page and his family managed to escape to Washington, DC. While there, he began his educational endeavors at Howard University, then successfully completed his studies at Brown. Selected as class orator for the 1877 Commencement Exercises, Page received much acclaim for his eloquent speech. The following day, the Providence Journal assessed him in this way:

Mr. Page did not receive his position as class orator from a chivalrous recognition of his race by his white associates...
He is an orator of rare ability, speaking with weight and sententiousness...
and at times rising to a profound and impressive eloquence.
As a result of that memorable speech, Page received a teaching position at Natchez Seminary in Mississippi. This marked the beginning of a long and outstanding career in several educational institutions. Brown sought to underscore his achievements with an honorary Master’s degree in 1918. Following this, Page dedicated his life to the improvement of Oklahoma City’s educational facilities. He was President of Langston University for seventeen years, and, subsequently, was appointed supervising principal of that city’s secondary school system.

Dr. Page and George Washington Milford, another Black member of the Class of 1877, paved the way for an impressive history of Black graduates to follow. Such individuals as John Hope, a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society of the Class of 1894, and Ethel Tremaine Robinson, the first Black woman to graduate from Pembroke in 1905, are simply two of the many distinguished alumni in Brown’s history.

To say that Brown's commitment to racial equality has been long and honorable, however, is not to say that it has not been constrained by the prevailing social mores surrounding the issue of race or been without the tensions and trials that the question of racial equity has raised for higher education in America. One significant statistic provides historical perspective. In 1970, Brown could not claim 100 Black graduates; over 95% of the University’s more than 2,100 minority alumni have been graduated since that year. Thus while Brown's commitment to the principle of racial equality is a historic one, its experience with the issues involved with the education of minority students in significant numbers is relatively recent. Those minority students who followed Page through the first six decades of the twentieth century found many challenges, but they faced them mostly alone in an overwhelmingly white community. There were no minority faculty, professional staff, or even clergy. These men and women were pioneers in a very real sense, discovering year after year the same frontier.

It is immediately apparent, on reading the documents of successive generations of Black, Asian and Latino students at Brown, that their concerns and demands have changed little over the past seventeen years. Has nothing changed at Brown in that time? Much has changed, the number of Black and Asian students has grown substantially, the University has developed effective programs for academic and social support and students have created a supportive sense of community. At Brown as elsewhere, however, the sense of marginality which is the central problem facing minority students at all predominantly white institutions has remained unresolved. This problem is the axis around which all the minority student demands over past seventeen years have revolved with varying emphases and strategies.

The feeling of marginality arises in three main areas. First, when there are few visible minority students on a campus, those who are present often feel isolated. Not only is there a social distance from their white peers but in the process of gaining acceptance they are often made to feel that they are the “exceptions” to their racial or ethnic group. The feeling of marginality in this case is the classical pull between two antagonistic cultures. At a second level, when minority students see few minority faculty members, they are likely to see the academic enterprise as something in which they participate only as consumer or spectator. Finally, when minority students find that their experience as ethnic Americans is not reflected in research and the curriculum, they receive the implicit message that their experiences, traditions, values, and mores are not considered worthy of serious consideration by their teachers or peers. At a nationally prestigious university, with a faculty of international reputation, this message takes on added significance since it is widely perceived by students that much of the nation’s intellectual agenda is set at just such institutions.
Until the late 1960's the number of minority students in any class at Brown and Pembroke could be counted in the single digits, well below the threshold for a community or sense of support. Minority students, primarily Blacks and Asians, developed informal and personal strategies for coping with their sense of marginality and isolation. Informal networks evolved through which older minority students oriented minority freshmen to the folkways of the college; many close and enduring friendships among minority students were forged at Brown and Pembroke. However, the chief strategy for coping with a feeling of isolation and marginality in the Fifties and early Sixties was to internalize those feelings and seek acceptance and assimilation through personal achievement. While this strategy often produced notable results in terms of academic and athletic achievement, it was sometimes accompanied by considerable psychic pain and lingering resentment towards the University experience. A Black graduate of the Class of 1927 spoke poignantly even in 1974 about the suicide of his roommate almost fifty years earlier. If not disaster, there was a legacy of psychological scars born silently by those who persevered the Brown experience.

By 1968, as the civil rights and anti-war movements forced a reconsideration of national values and institutional arrangements, the 38 Black students then at Brown and Pembroke turned their sense of marginality and isolation outward in an expression of alienation from the University. The members of the Afro-American Society—or the Afro, as it was called—shocked the community by “walking out” to a self-imposed exile to Olney Street Baptist Church, eight blocks away. Virtually all the Black students demanded an affirmative action recruitment plan for admissions, a support program, and a Black Studies program. They left campus vowing not to return until their demands were met.

The University’s response to this protest was immediate. It mandated the recruitment and admission of minority students. It instituted an academic summer program to help prepare talented but underprepared minority students from inner-city high schools. The Afro-American Studies program was begun and the Afro-American house on campus was established as a meeting place for minority students.

By 1975, however, the increasingly difficult financial situation of the University seemed to threaten the gains that had been made over the preceding six years. The Summer Transitional Program, an intensive six-week program which had been designed to provide academic preparation for accepted freshmen from the inner city, was found to be too costly for the few minority students it served. It was replaced by a more comprehensive year-long group of programs that included writing tutorials, special sections of gateway science and math courses, the Minority Peer Counseling Program and a special orientation program known as Third World Transition Week. But in the spring of 1975, the University administration proposed a budget that would have cut faculty positions and financial aid. The response of minority students was to join white students in a strike of classes. When the strike ended, however, with no resolution of the issues, Asian, Black and Latino students who felt particularly threatened by the cuts formed a Third World Coalition and occupied the administration building.

These minority students meant to consolidate and preserve the community that had been started in 1968. Their demands focused on a restoration of financial aid for Third World students and a recommitment with specific goals and timetables for the recruitment of Asian, Black, and Latino students. In addition, however, the students also demanded that the University renew its commitment to Afro-American Studies and to the recruitment of minority faculty. In the meantime, the University had been busy at the design of a Third World Center to replace the Afro-American house which was being torn down to make way for a new dormitory.
In the decade since 1975, considerable strides have been made in attracting minority students to Brown. While the recruitment of Latino students, especially Chicanos and Puerto Ricans from the mainland, remains a serious problem, the number of Black and Asian American matriculants has grown substantially. In addition to increasing the number of minority students, the University has been successful in nurturing a supportive sense of community among them. The Third World Center provides an institution through which the various minority student organizations mount extracurricular programs, lectures, and workshops of interest to them. In addition, over the past ten years, the Student Support Program (SSP), which replaced the Transitional Summer Program, has evolved into a campus-wide program of academic and social support.

The context of the 1985 Third World student protest was significantly different from the one ten years earlier. And, not surprisingly, the emphasis of the minority students’ demands, while wholly within the framework of 1968, was far different from that of their predecessors. The students, more secure in their numbers and sense of community, have moved beyond demands for a presence on campus. The current issue, brought to the surface by incidents of harassment, is their feeling that their presence is not respected. Thus the emphasis of their demands is on the parts of the historic agenda to bring minorities fully into the mainstream of the University’s enterprise: the faculty and the curriculum.

*This history was prepared by Associate Dean Kathryn Mohrman from presentations made to the Visiting Committee by Herman Eschenbacher, Professor of Education; Robert G. Lee, Associate Dean for Curricular Resources and Foreign Study; and John M. Robinson, Dean of Students.*