

2-17-1970

Supplementary statement on philosophy

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Recommended Citation

Brakeman, Louis, "Supplementary statement on philosophy" (1970). *Writing Our Story*. 108.
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The assumption that black student problems will be resolved through members alone is not valid in our view. Nonetheless significantly increased numbers, one hundred or somewhat more, are essential for the development of a humane life for black students, especially in the face of prevailing dating patterns and social life generally. The development of a sense of personal and group identity is a necessary part of a person's life. Only out of such a feeling of identity and worth can a true wider community develop. What the components are which contribute to a sense of identity, acceptance and worth is far from clear. We have no interest in fostering separatism, hatred and unproductive conflict. Tension there may be and this can be productive. To be sure the balance between a situation on the one hand which fosters identity and encourages creativity, critical examination of society, and leads to a true sense of wider community and a situation on the other hand which fosters an identity which is negative, vituperative, which leads to separatism and a lack of direct communication is difficult to guarantee. It is this balance which we hope for.

We have no interest in the exclusive goal of Black identity. The consolidation of Black identity as an exclusive educational goal may be valid. We certainly cannot deny that for some it may well be. We do not intend that it be Denison's goal for Black students here. We do want to provide conditions under which Black students can feel more comfortable, in which a sense of identity can be achieved. At this point we see this identity being fostered by having more Black students on campus, by having Black faculty members and advisors and by providing direct educational opportunities for the study of the Black contribution to our national life and for the study of African culture. Links to the Black communities of Newark and Columbus may well provide additional opportunities for Black students to receive support and to make contributions related to their abilities and to the insights they gain through their educational experiences here. We think this can be done in a broad educational context which provides Black students as well as Whites, educational opportunities which will allow them to make positive contributions to society and to the grappling with the complex problems our society increasingly faces. We have not done much hard looking at our overall curriculum. We need to do so.

We see the decision to continue and to speed up the process of having more Black students on campus as a first step in the process of an increased diversification of our college community. We do not want to preclude the opportunity for wide diversification by policies now adopted. We think that our recommendations in respect to admissions, recruitment and financial aid will preserve our opportunities to develop and to carry out a plan for wide diversification of the student body.

Our essential rationale for encouraging the development of a Black community and of providing curriculum opportunities via a Black Studies program is to assist students to achieve an understanding of cultures other than their own and to gain from this increased understanding a more complete, a more satisfying view of themselves and the world.

The educational opportunities we develop and the total environment we encourage should be consistent with this overriding objective.

General perspectives of the Task Force on the Demands

The Task Force is committed to implementation, but within the context of the many priorities and values of the college. We do assert that the priorities inherent in the concerns of those committed to action on behalf of Black students must be taken seriously—more seriously than they have been in the past.

We do not hold that the actions called for by the Black students and by the faculty resolution of January 26 are in every case simple or clear in precise meaning. We see part of our task as one of clarifying meaning.

Nor do we agree that whatever specific meaning is attached to the various words and phrases, that the action called for is to be achieved at whatever cost or consequence to the college.

In short, we hold that we must suggest ways to implement the actions called for within our understanding of the precise meaning of the actions called for and in the context of a complex of priorities and aims of the college.

More than this, we are committed to the development of a series of proposals which will enhance the opportunities at Denison for a creative, humane and equitable life for all students.

LB
2-17-70