

An Overall Look:

City University In Perspective

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PART II

The CUNY scheme to modify its educational system so as to admit more minority members onto the lower rungs — as evidenced by the rigidity of the senior college complex — merely escalates overall education without affecting the differentials between white and Black.

Community colleges such as Number VII planned for the South Bronx seem admirably designed to reinforce occupational segregation. The college, working in conjunction with Lincoln Hospital, will concentrate on producing much "needed paraprofessional health aides" for services in the city's hospitals.

This is the lowest rung of the socio-economic and status ladder, where pay is lowest and which is, even now (by custom and tradition) exclusively Black and Puerto Rican, where the work is most unappealing and pay lowest and, of course, opportunity for advancement nonexistent.

Since educational differential is a convenient vehicle for employer discrimination, CUNY's exclusion of Blacks from greater immediate representation in the senior colleges and academic (not "paraprofessional") community college programs, appears, at worst, blatantly irresponsible, and at best, a very

sad mis-reading of the City's needs or the university's role as a city urbanization institution.

British Literature

All CUNY college students are required to take a full year of British literature — from Beowulf to Eliot — but are required to take no courses at all in American Literature.

There are no courses even vaguely suggestive of Black culture; (music, literature, art) or the role Blacks have played in the founding and growth of the country. To CUNY, American culture is not just primarily, but almost totally Anglo-Saxon. This attitude accounts in part for the abysmal ignorance which Life Magazine documented in its series, "Recapturing the Black Past."

The cultural prejudice contributes to the irrelevancy of much of what passes for education at this "could be" great urban institution, and directly relates to the miserable failure

of the corps of New York City teachers who have been educated there.

The imperatives of contemporary urban life, so carefully dissected in a host of commission reports and other works, is yet to be reflected in a single course at CU. The students — largely apathetic in any case — remain sublimely immersed in their papers on Beowulf, leaving real and relevant up-to-date inquiry to the Urban Coalition or to Life Magazine.

There is a special kind of irony in hearing a CU professor of English, a custodian of free inquiry and truth, question whether Blacks have made any input to American literature and poetry. But, perhaps it should not be surprising . . .

Jobs, Prestige

City University, to the Administrators, professors and instructional and clerical staff, is a marvelous industry providing jobs and high prestige. For the professors, it is a kind of intellectual power base, or latter-day fiefdom. It represents for them at least all an urbanization institution—a machine a it were for assisting in the urbanization of the "new middle class."

Reaction to initial, very minor attempts at democratization at CU (addition of a few Blacks) shows that most resistance is found among professors and department heads whose self-image (as Oxford imitators) is damaged by too great a concern with contemporary issues or problems and certainly not "urban problems."

(To Be Concluded Next Week)