

THOSE YOU NEVER KNOW

By Zelbert Moore and Paul Galloway

In January 1946 Ada Lois Sipuel, an honor student at Langston University, applied for admission to the University of Oklahoma College of Law. Because the color of her skin was black and since the state provided a separate law school for black Oklahomans at Langston, Miss Sipuel was denied entrance, the victim of the state's segregation statutes. Miss Sipuel and the NAACP decided to test Oklahoma's Jim Crow laws in the courts.

On January 12, 1948, after a long and involved legal journey, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the University must admit the Chickasha coed (*Sipuel vs. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, 332 U.S. 631, 92L.ed247). On a June day in 1949 Miss Sipuel entered Monnet Hall at the beginning of the summer session on her way to becoming the first black American to graduate from OU. A professor recalls the sign which greeted her. It read "For Colored Only" and was hung on a string suspended from two coat trees which *Zelbert Moore, a graduate student, is a Public Information Office writer. Galloway is Sooner Magazine editor.*

were placed before her desk at the rear of the classroom away from the other students. The sign was the attorney general's interpretation of the law, but Miss Sipuel's fellow students found it too offensive even for a segregated society. By the third day of class the coat trees, the string, and the sign had been quietly and unofficially removed.

Miss Sipuel wasn't the first black Oklahoman to attend classes with white Oklahomans at OU, though her legal challenge was the breakthrough that led to the integration of state schools. In October 1948 George W. McLaurin, a 54-year-old teacher, was admitted to the Graduate College to study toward an advanced degree in education, since a similar program was not offered at Langston, the state's sole black university. Acting under the law, OU authorities arranged "separate but equal" treatment for McLaurin. He was seated in an anteroom *separate* from his white classmates but from which he could see and hear the professor *equally* as well as the students in the classroom.

Today there are about 200 black

students at OU. Reaching an exact total is difficult, for enrollment records do not make racial distinctions. (Recently integrated Alabama and LSU reportedly have 400 each. Indiana with 1,600 of 27,000 is believed to have the largest black student enrollment in the United States. All Big Ten and most Pacific Coast schools have as many or more black students than the University. Even the University of Mississippi has 24 black students enrolled in the law school; OU has one.)

Figures suggest progress has been made, and some has. The physical barriers which segregated McLaurin and Miss Sipuel have disappeared. Black athletes now compete in the intercollegiate sports program. There are four black professors on the faculty.

The University, however, is not a place where the American Dream is reality, where a person is accepted on the basis of his ability and not viewed as a racial symbol, for the college campus is only a reflection, a more sophisticated and civilized one to be sure, of American society, where racial bigotry and discrimination have

From left to right, are Edmund Atkins, Mary Lou Cannon, John Sadberry, Willie Wilson, Sylvia Robinson, Bruce Robinson, Judy Sydner.



been and are a way of life, where racial prejudice is deeply engrained in the American psyche.

The black OU student is conservative when it comes to racial matters. He is less militant, less outspoken, more reluctant to become involved with causes than his counterparts at some schools in the East (the Ivy League institutions), Midwest (the Big Ten schools), and the West (Berkeley, San Jose State, UCLA, Stanford).

There are reasons. He generally comes from a family which has only recently achieved black middle-class status, and he and his family have something to gain and something to lose for the first time. He is usually a graduate of an all-black high school, where his education was inferior to that offered at a white high school. He must work hard for grades and doesn't wish to jeopardize his often tenuous academic standing with militancy. The repressive atmosphere of Oklahoma and the general apathy of the OU campus also tends to discourage risk.

The conservative tag, when applied to a black student, doesn't have the same meaning as when used in connection with a white student. Though a black student may refrain from activity in movements with racial overtones, his attitude is usually more militant, for he shares with all black people, whether they are in an urban ghetto, the rural South, or an inte-

grated suburb, the knowledge of white racism, which the recent report of the President's Commission on Civil Disorders pointed to as the chief cause of urban "riots" or rebellions by black Americans. There is a feeling of brotherhood among black Americans that is born under suppression; in some ways the black man lives as if he were in an occupied country.

More and more black students, at OU and on all campuses, are adopting a more militant stance with regard to race and its myriad complexities and implications. A typical new black activist might say, "Look, there are too many Uncle Toms among us as it is. Too many will 'shuffle' for the white power structure as long as they're cut in. I believe this country will never be right and a good place for me and my children to live until black people have an equal chance. We don't now, and we never will until we unite and involve ourselves with the black community and make it strong. We must meet power with power. I think the answer lies in confronting problems, rather than letting them pass; speaking out and building racial pride and solidarity. There is just too much wrong with this system, but we can't change it by closing our eyes and praying."

The black militant is aware that with a college education he will earn less in his lifetime than a white American with a high-school educa-

tion. He knows that black Americans will be paid less than white Americans for doing the same job. He realizes that in most of this country a black American cannot buy any home he wants, cannot live anywhere he can afford. He understands that American history is filled with oppression of black Americans but that history books often ignore or distort the truth. He knows that the black man's accomplishments go largely unnoted by these same books. He is aware that this nation's Declaration of Independence grandly proclaimed the principle that "all men are created equal" and have "certain inalienable rights" which include "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." He knows that at the same time these words were written and for almost another one hundred years thereafter, human slavery was practiced and condoned by this nation, that the father of the country was also a master of slaves.

He is familiar with the elaborate myths which white Americans have built to justify their treatment of black Americans and to explain the contradictions and hypocrisies which have always been a part of the land in which "individual freedom" is a favorite phrase.

He knows from experience that America has a white problem, that racism is entrenched and institutionalized in the home of the brave and the land of the free. He winces when the white man boasts of how far the



black American has come. He smiles cynically when the white compares the black American's situation with that of a citizen in another country as his way of proving this progress. The black militant knows that in the most affluent nation in the history of the world, the black American's unemployment rate is twice that of the white American's. He sees the black ghettos as a national disgrace in which the American who lives there pays more rent and higher store prices than the white American who lives in the same city; that by the twelfth grade the black children are three and one-half years behind the white children their age but *not* when the black and white children are of the same social class.

He hears some white Americans talk of sending him back to Africa, he who has been an American for 400 years, who has built much of this country, who has shed blood for it, who has contributed to its social, economic, and cultural life. He sees a white immigrant accepted immediately without four years of "proving himself," much less four centuries. He knows that some white politicians may hide their bigotry behind ambiguous phrases but that their followers know exactly what they mean.

He knows of his splendid fighting record that covers all American wars. He also knows that during World War Two German prisoners-of-war were served in American restaurants in the

South while their black American guards were denied entrance. He knows of the years of violence against him, of Southern lynchings and Northern and Midwestern race riots. He is aware that though the black American comprises only ten percent of the population, his number among the fighting men in Vietnam is disproportionately higher and that thirty percent of the casualties are black Americans. He is weary of hearing old immigrant white "philosophers" like Eric Hoffer say how the black American is "proving himself" in Vietnam.

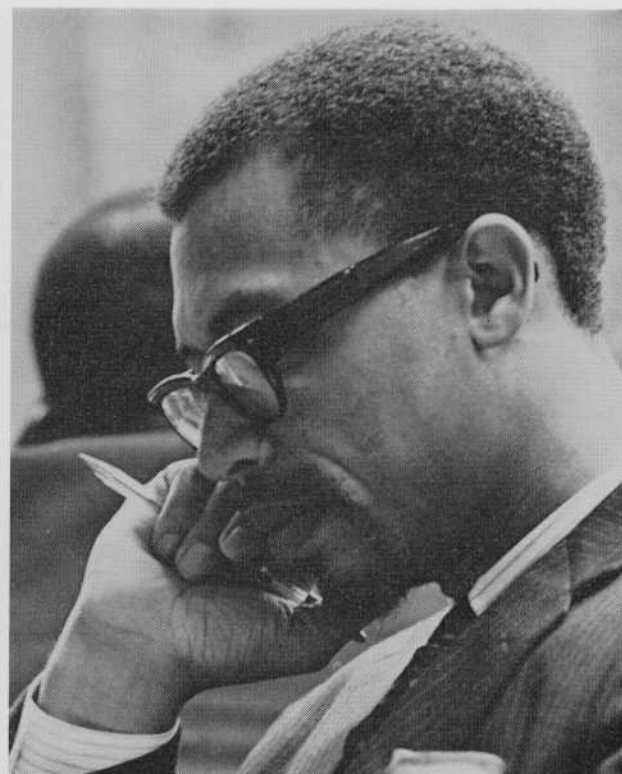
He is puzzled by the pride Americans show when they pass laws giving black Americans "civil rights" that should have been theirs all along. He is hard-pressed to understand how white men can feel so noble for having passed legislation 100 years after Emancipation ensuring his right to vote and enabling him to spend his money in business establishments supposedly open to all the American public. He is bitter when white Americans are pleased at their justice when a white murderer is finally convicted and sentenced to ten years for denying a black man his civil rights, i.e. killing him.

He knows that he can't worship God in some churches. He knows equal treatment is denied him in the courts of law in sections of the country. He knows the self-perpetuating,

paternalistic welfare programs which are imposed on him by white politicians and which keep him poor and dependent. He knows job discrimination. He knows hate. He is proud that he has survived.

He wonders what difference the color of one's skin should make in a nation overbearing in its self-righteousness, its moral arrogance, a nation which thinks of itself as a democratic messiah. He has had long experience with the duplicity of white America, however, and he knows that though the riot commission report calls for a national change in attitude, many white Americans, including national leaders, newspaper writers and editors, will disagree. They will shift the blame away from themselves. They will effect moral indignation and call for cool heads. They will use the perennial bogeyman—communism—as a scapegoat. Those with white power will become hysterical in their denunciation of black power, though the term merely implies racial pride, racial awareness, and racial self-determination. And they will construct fresh explanations to be passed on from generation to generation which will rationalize the injustices, indignities, and inhumanity white America has inflicted on black Americans. They will become emotional about the legacy of their intransigence—black racism—and indecisive about the emergency which faces them.

From left to right are Robert Wooten, Zelbert Moore (the author), Gwen Woods, San Toi DeBose, Willie Rogers, Bill Moffet, Gloria Wilson.



The black militant realizes that America, entangled in a brutal, questionable engagement thousands of miles away, is capable of ignoring the domestic seeds of destruction, deciding that the impending disaster at home can be handled with force in what could become another civil war, that the resolution of the causes can be postponed. He hears the statement by a sociologist who testified before the riot commission that there is nothing in the history of the country's racial relations that indicates America has the ethical or moral strength and motivation to solve its racial plight.

The black student, burdened with the national malaise toward the racial tinderbox, finds little escape or hope on the college campus. The institutions of higher education offer no retreat. At OU, as at most schools, he finds discrimination and exclusion.

Private housing is often discriminatory. One basketball player and his wife went to 29 private dwellings which advertised vacancies before the University found them a place in its units. A black student who recently returned from Vietnam where he was an officer in the Army was advised by the OU housing office of available University-approved private housing. He called three of the leads and each told of a vacancy. Upon presenting himself, he was informed that each had either "just been rented" or that it was "not yet ready for occupancy." Bitter, humiliated, and frustrated, he

called the housing office which provided him with a unit in the "all beige" Section A of Neimann Apartments on the campus. The only black home-owner is faculty member George Henderson. Norman has no open housing codes, and the Hendersons had trouble locating a home they wanted.

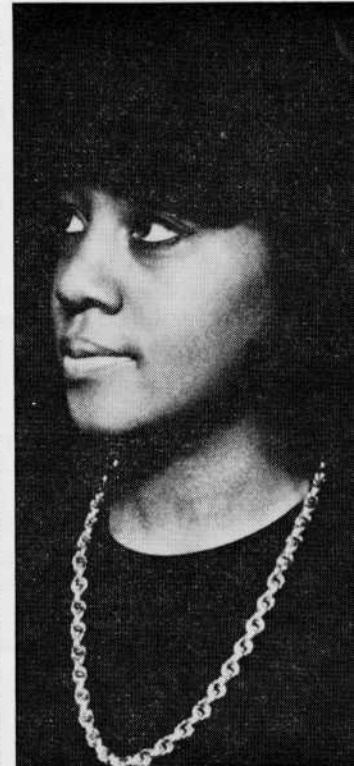
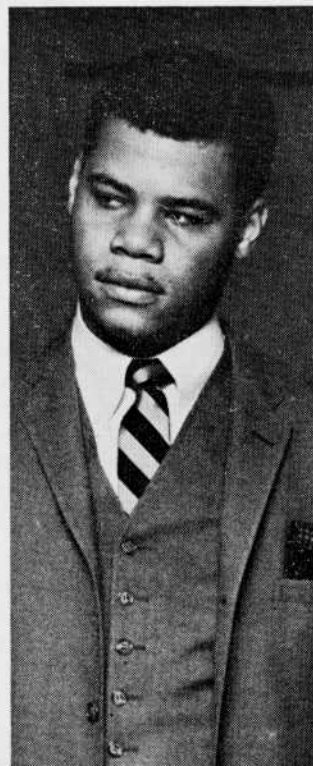
The Greek system is discriminatory. A recent article in Vanguard, the newsheet of the Afro-American Students' Union, said that currently "3,300 brothers and sisters are spread among 37 Greek houses. Save for the existence of one all-black fraternity, all of them are white, and most of them want to keep it that way. Unlike . . . organizations on other campuses which have attempted to induct black students into membership only to be suspended by the national organization, no fraternity at OU has even tried. . . . The same ambiguous membership standards of the 1920s are applied to the selection of prospective members in the 1960s. While no one knows precisely what these are, it is quite apparent that at least one of them is membership in the Caucasian race.

More important than the evils of membership selection are the attitudes toward race and class which the societies engender in their members. According to research studies performed at the University of Michigan, Greek letter orders inculcate atti-

tudes of class superiority in members . . . Coupled with this snobbish attitude is the inoculation of a 'don't-rock-the-boat' mentality which stifles efforts at creative discussion and change . . . Because contacts with non-Greeks are highly restricted, the societies perpetuate a centuries-old tradition of segregation of blacks and whites and encourage the retention of existing racial stereotypes. The sheltered white middle-class child who never met a black man in suburbia becomes the sheltered white student who never really 'knew' a black student at college."

Two distinct societies exist for the most part—black and white—and neither knows much about the other. Few relationships go beyond tentativeness and superficiality. There is little communication.

White Americans are fond of saying, to establish their racial insights, in their country-club locker-room discussions or during dinner party conversations among fellow whites, "I've gone to school with them all my life, and . . ." The inference is usually absurd. Most white Americans do *not* have black American friends and make no attempt to have any. This is true on college campuses as well as in off-campus situations. Many of the relationships are condescending on the part of the whites. (Mort Sahl says a white liberal is one who talks of his maid.) Despite an environment dedicated to rational investigation,

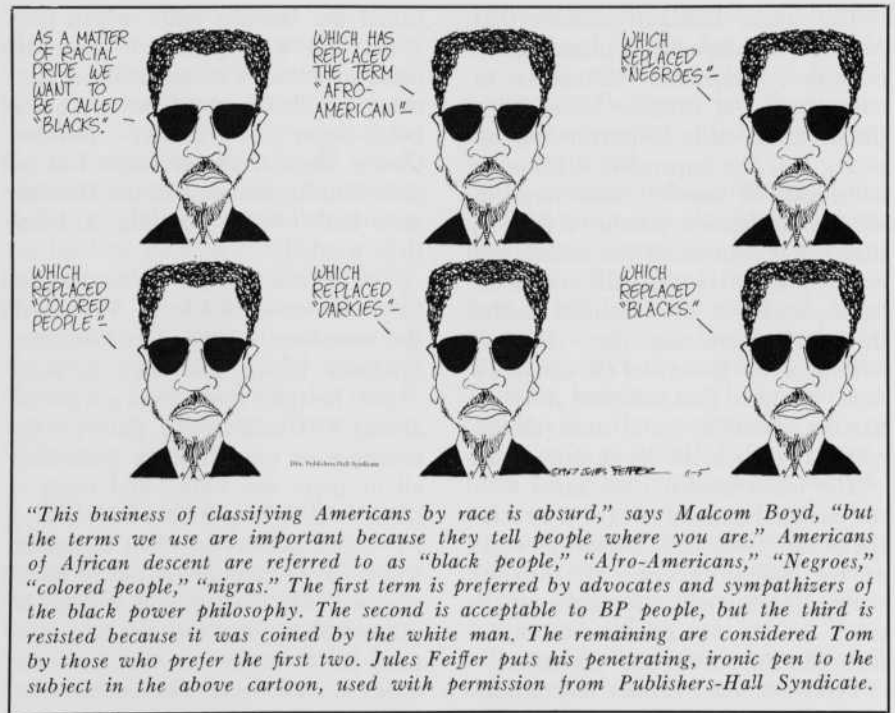


tolerance, and edification, most whites leave school with no close relationships or experiences with black classmates.

Prejudices learned earlier at home and school survive. "Until I entered OU, I had never encountered prejudice on such a blatantly hostile level. It often stares at me from a sea of white faces, and sometimes the look is of pure hatred. At other times, the faces look through me, as if I were not there." These are the words of a black coed, spoken in 1968. Some people—white people—may be surprised that they are uttered about a campus regarded by most to be a model of racial equality and harmony. Says another: "I haven't had my hopes dashed, because I didn't have any. I am wiser because my years at the University have taught me not to expect whites to accept me with respect for what and who I am. Along with an education in the classroom, I have received another important lesson. I have learned that with few exceptions I am not considered equal. My skin color makes me different and despite all the liberal talk, I'll never *really* be equal. I'll still have to know a little more, do a little more, be a little more for the same jobs and the same pay as whites."

Shirley Harris, a senior from Tulsa majoring in social work, recalls, "I entered OU with few expectations other than obtaining a degree. My culture was entirely black. I was a black youth from a black community educated in black schools. I'd had virtually no contact with whites except in stores where I bought clothes and food and what I had read in textbooks.

"I remember being startled when girls who lived in my dorm quickly looked the other way when I met them on the street. Our relationship had seemed so easy in the dorm. Was I a different person on the street? Had I become an unperson as soon as we stepped into the outside world? It was a source of bitter amusement to see mouths drop and expressions change when I was an assistant counselor in the dorm in my sophomore year and would announce such to the new students on my floor: 'I'm your third-floor counselor.' Resentment? Yes, it was there. Probably many wanted to know what the young man



asked one night as he visited his girl friend at the dorm: 'How come y'all got a nigger counselor?'

"I was at the same dorm for two years. The assistant dean of women in charge of housing didn't want to put me in a freshman dorm because she didn't feel the freshman *mothers* would be 'ready.'"

Cruel experiences, conscious or otherwise, can leave scars. "Some white students in my dorm," says a coed, "decided it would be clever to 'decorate' my door. They put a Ku Klux Klan emblem on it with catsup streaming off the letters to represent blood. My counselor assured me this was not done maliciously. It was difficult to explain the way I felt. I was sick. What kind of minds could think the KKK could be a joke with me—an organization which has so senselessly and arrogantly killed and tortured so many of my black brothers and sisters strictly on the basis of skin color? I wouldn't think a swastika on a Jewish person's door was a joke."

Outright bigotry is never far. "How many times has a car passed me and someone yelled 'Nigger!?' How many times has someone poked me with an umbrella, turned around, looked at me, and said nothing? It's horrible to know that there are people who cannot accept me or my people as human beings because our skin is black."

Distrust can make relationships

awkward. "Most white students ignore black students as much as possible or else are overcongenial when their curiosity gets the better of them," say a senior male. "One extreme or the other is usually the case. I'm always treated a little special. I have become quite discriminating in my relationships with white students."

A coed points to a preoccupation which can complicate friendships. "I am skeptical of whites because most want to discuss race with me at the exclusion of other subjects. They want to know how I 'feel' about Stokely Carmichael. I'd much rather talk about the music we like, what movies we've seen—other things." Says another: "I know I am Exhibit A for some whites' liberality, and I can see the insincerity in some. Hell, all black people can read white people. They've had to learn to in this country. I also realize that as the only black person some white persons know, I am important in their understanding of something they honestly want to understand and desperately need to. I am trying for dialogue. I know if I quit trying, I must quit complaining. So many of my fellow black students, however, are deeply embittered. It's difficult. Many have lost hope."

Life for a black student on a predominantly white campus in a predominantly white nation can be cas-

trating to one's self-respect. In the already impersonal environment of a large state university, the black student becomes further alienated by the daily abuse to his identity, as monotonous and effective as the classic Chinese water torture. Everything is white, yet to try to begin a friendship with some he often runs into cold hate. "Sex is a big hangup with the whites. If I even look at a girl, much less talk to her, I can feel some recoil. They are unbelievable. White girls, some of them, must think black men are going to rape them if they show any friendliness. Incredible."

To help the black student face such reality and to give him something to identify with, there has been a nationwide trend on college campuses toward the creation of "Afro-American" organizations limited to black students. Senior Editor Ernest Dunbar of *Look* magazine was among the first to recognize this development. In an article entitled "The Black Revolt Hits the White Campus," Dunbar found these groups, from Harvard and Columbia to Berkeley and Stanford, causing con-

siderable confusion and apprehension among college students and administrations. "Blacks themselves are debating the value of the organizations," Dunbar wrote. "Afro-American groups are formed for a variety of reasons. Among them is a feeling that the curriculum in American universities has blanked out the Afro-American's contributions to the nation's history and that the outlook of most white students is different from that of most Negro collegians because of different backgrounds."

Writes Vance Raye, editor of the *Vanguard*, on the question of black history: "Although the Negro has played a significant role in history since the dawn of civilization, he hasn't found a home in history texts. Speaking in 1840, Henry Garnett, a militant Negro clergyman, said: 'All other races are permitted to travel over the wide fields of history and pluck the flowers that bloom there—to glean up heroes, philosophers, sages, poets, and put them in a galaxy of brilliant genius; but if a black man attempts to do so, he is met at the threshold by the objection, "You have no ancestry behind you!"'

"The belief in white supremacy has been fully shared by historians . . . The majority of them have operated under the assumption that the role of the Negro was hardly worth considering."

Says the president of George Washington University's Black Student Union, "We needed an organization where black students could come together to discuss common problems and implement common interests." A member of another group explains, "Getting black students together helps them psychologically. This is a consolidating force which will bring an awareness to both black and white students."

The black students' union is an application of black power to the college campus. The words "black power" signaled an end to the civil rights movement as a coalition of white liberals and black people and threw the latter into a more militant, more impatient stance. Black power says that black people must lead their own movement, that they must not try to become white but rather build racial pride and understanding. It tells the white man to concern himself with

A Bibliography of the Black Man's History and Thoughts

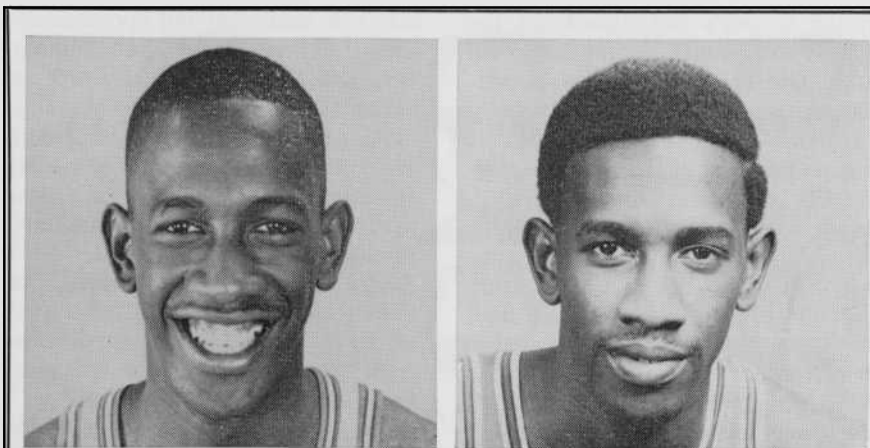
Read *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Bantam Books.

1. *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America 1619-1966*; Johnson Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill.
2. *The Negro Vanguard*; Richard Bar-dolph; Vintage Books (V-198).
3. *The Negro in American Culture*; Margaret Just Butcher; Mentor Books (MD-206).
4. *The Emancipation Proclamation*; John Hope Franklin; Doubleday, 1963.
5. *From Slavery to Freedom*; John Hope Franklin; Alfred A. Knopf, 1956.
6. *Reconstruction: After the Civil War*; John Hope Franklin; University of Chicago Press, 1961.
7. *The Negro Revolt*; Louis Lomax; Signet (T2273).
8. *The Negro's Civil War*; James M. McPherson, editor; Pantheon Press, 1965.
9. *The Negro Since Emancipation*; Harvey Wish; Spectrum Books (S-106).
10. *The Negro in the American Revolution*; Benjamin Quarles; University of North Carolina Press.
11. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*; C. Vann Woodward; Oxford Press and Galaxy Books (6GB).
12. *Black Bourgeoisie*; E. Franklin Frazier; Collier Books, 1962, (AS 347).
13. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*; Grove Press, 1964.
14. *The Negro in America*; Arnold Rose; Harper Torchbooks (TB 30481).
15. *Invisible Man*; Ralph Ellison; Signet Books (Q2722).
16. *White Man Listen*; Richard Wright; Doubleday Books (A414).
17. *Native Son*; Richard Wright; Signet Classic (CT-81).
18. *The Black Muslims in America*; C. Eric Lincoln; Beacon Books, 1961, (BP 137).
19. *The Souls of Black Folk*; W. E. B. DuBois; Premier Americana, 1961 (D-127).
20. *Nobody Knows My Name*; James Baldwin; Delta Books, 1961.
21. *The Fire Next Time*; James Baldwin.
22. *Eyewitness: The Negro and American History*; Wm. Loren Katz; Pitman.
23. *Black Is Best*; The Riddle of Cassius Clay; Jack Olsen; Dell (0630).
24. *Crisis in Black and White*; Charles E. Silberman; Vintage Giant (V-279).
25. *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West*; William H. Leckie; OU Press, 1967.
26. *The Negro in American Thought, 1880-1915*; August Meier; University of Michigan Press.
27. *The Mind of the South*; W. J. Cash; Vintage Books (V-98).
28. *The White Problem in America*; Editors of *Ebony* Magazine; Johnson Publishing Co.
29. *Manchild in the Promised Land*; Claude Brown; Signet Books.
30. *The Troublesome Presence: American Democracy and the Negro*; Eli Ginzberg and Alfred S. Eichner; Mentor Books (MT667).
31. *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*; Kenneth B. Clark; Harper Torchbooks (TB 1317).
32. *Black Like Me*; John Howard Griffin; Signet Books (D 2171).
33. *Why We Can't Wait*; Martin Luther King; Signet Books (P-2476).
34. *Stride Toward Freedom*; Martin Luther King; Ballantine Books (F-411-K).
35. *This Is My Country Too*; John A. Williams; Signet.
36. *Slavery: A Problem in Institutional and Intellectual Life*; Stanley M. Elkins; Grossets' Universal Library.
37. *The Betrayal of the Negro*; Dr. Raymond W. Logan; Collier Books.
38. *Black Power*; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton; Vintage Books.
39. *Soul on Ice*; Eldridge Cleaver; McGraw-Hill, 1968.

white racism, that the black man will determine his own life, control his own destiny, establish his own power base in his own communities. The move toward degrees of separatism has been distressing to some. Malcolm Boyd says, however, that white persons who are concerned about racial equality must respect this separatism and concentrate on correcting the white problem. Many believe this is the best route to mutual respect and integration.

Black power advocates and sympathizers believe that black is beautiful despite what they have been conditioned to believe; that there is nothing wrong or uncultured in preferring James Brown, Miriam Makeba, and Aretha Franklin to DeBussy, Bach, Beethoven, or Frank Sinatra; that soul talk and soul food are to be desired; that the black man has a proud heritage and a strong future. And the black man's concept of himself and his image to the white man have changed. "He's thought of as a tough son-of-a-bitch now," says Bill Cosby.

The Afro-American Students' Union was formed on the OU campus this fall. A similar organization was established at Stillwater, and steps



More and more black Americans, particularly young men, are wearing their hair longer and "natural," a manifestation of racial pride encouraged by the black power movement. Because of the continual bombardment of white values and white standards in the society, the black American began to question his own physical characteristics. Many came to believe their coarse, wiry hair was somehow ugly because it was different from the white man's. This conditioning led to "processing" or straightening hair, a practice which is now declining, chiefly among men, however. Don Sidle, OU's All-American basketball player, used to have his hair cropped in the "Quo Vadis" style (left), still preferred by many. Today he wears his hair in the longer "Afro" style (right).

are being made to create one at OCU. The OU group hopes to provide a social structure for the black student, many of whom may be drifting anonymously in campus waters.

The president of the union is Harold Andrews, a 22-year-old graduate

of Douglass High in Oklahoma City. Andrews, an electrical engineering major, says, "At first a black student is tempted to 'shed' his color at OU and assume white values and standards over black ones. For some this is a phase, for others a way of life. We

Foreword

Afro-American Students' Union Constitution

FROM TIME TO TIME black students at the University have discussed their regret at the absence of a social organization on campus that eagerly sought their membership and full participation and with which they could identify fully. The feeling of isolation and of having to conform to standards and values that have little personal meaning to us conspires to intensify our frustration at being black students in this University, in this general environment and country, under conditions which deny to us, yes, even ignore, the preconditions for pride in ourselves and in our race.

OVER THE PAST three months a representative group of Black OU students met to evaluate this predicament and decided to try to do something about it. In addition to general agreement that a unique Afro-American Student Union be established, there was also broad general agreement on the need for such an organization as well as a consensus on the possible purposes the union would serve. Among other conclusions, it was the consensus of the group that pride in self for Afro-Americans is inextricably entwined with race pride and that as a people with different needs we nevertheless enjoy only a small measure of the self-pride derivable from Negritude because neither our formal nor informal training has acquainted us with the facts of our common cultural heritage. Popular misconceptions about the "richness" of that heritage are held no less by Afro-Americans, as by other Americans. The reluctant but voluntary acceptance of middle-class white-oriented values and standards (which falsely promise success on merit but which add insult to injury by patently ignoring and denying the worth of Negritude) provide the incinerating, smolder-

ing logs for the sure but quiet embers of personality destruction through conscious and unconscious self-hate.

THERE WAS ALSO general agreement that being of African descent (whether or not considered a Negro by the community but having some ancestors from south of the Sahara Desert) is sometimes incidental and sometimes fundamental to our experiences at OU. For example, the general "blackout" of Afro-American contributions to the United States' history of economic development, science, letters, and the arts, screams for redress of a kind with which our middle-class white peers cannot identify. This is so because of the fundamental differences of their backgrounds as members of the majority group and because of the fundamental difference of their post-OU career and civic prospects.

ALTHOUGH IT WAS generally agreed that social progress in this country may eventually eliminate these and other fundamental differences among the races in social and economic opportunity, the group maintained that the harvest of equal opportunity will be an empty victory if it must be fertilized with the last of the precious few, positive vestiges of our Afro-American cultural heritage. As a consequence of the above consensu, the group enthusiastically urged that a union of Afro-American students be organized at OU. Together we can create an organization that will draw its strength from the fact that it was created by Afro-American students at OU for Afro-American students at OU, and of Afro-American students at OU with a common cultural heritage.

believe the latter can be destructive to the individual, and we formed the union to help keep it from happening."

Sterlin Adams, a 29-year old candidate for a PhD in math, is a former college teacher in a black school in Tennessee. He says he came to OU because he realized the widening gap between the education available in the areas of math and science for black people and white people. "I wanted to find security and escape from the realities of the black college," says Adams. "But my contact at OU gave me more than I bargained for. I began to see more clearly the problems facing black youth, and I knew I couldn't ignore them any longer. And there were those of us who were trying to do just that. On the national scene many black people are ruthlessly suppressed and unable to ignore their predicaments. It dawned on me that few persons are generally interested in the black man's problems, that one gets along best at OU if he pretends no problems exist or if he restrains himself from rocking the boat by never involving himself in more than a purely academic discussion of the problems.

"Because of this realization my goals have changed. I understand that the problems facing my people were created by white America and that whites do not have the right to live without the consciousness of the oppression that hangs over 21 million

black Americans 24 hours a day. I believe it is my duty to impress on black students who will shortly join the middle class that the problems will not be solved by pretending they don't exist or that they themselves aren't affected. It's important that they know the wounds will heal only if they speak without fear of white reprisals. Fear, unfortunately, is the state of mind of most of the black students at OU. I hope the union can make them aware of this situation."

Membership in the union is about forty. Its participants have discovered apathy and timidity among the black students. Says Gwenevere Hodges, assistant secretary of the union: "As long as nothing is said, nothing is done. You can become so accustomed to being slapped in the face because of your skin color that you become numb and withdraw. I used to try to be oblivious to the frowns and whispers, but it became impossible for me. I can't accept the prejudices as some students condition themselves to. The union will encourage the black student to take pride in himself and not to fear rebuffs. Too many now turn their heads. Others try to turn white and disassociate themselves from their black classmates."

Members hope the indifference can be overcome. Says an officer: "We want as many black students as possible to take part, of course, and we believe more eventually will. Our pri-

mary concern, however, is to function effectively, to offer leadership. We know there will always be some who will be afraid to join an all-black organization, and too, we have found that white students don't have the monopoly on apathy."

The main areas of concern for the union, in addition to serving as a social outlet, are housing, prejudice in the campus community and in public accommodations, and education.

Black Heritage week, in conjunction with a nationwide observance, was held at OU Feb. 12-17. The union displayed works of art and literature by black people in the library, sponsored an information booth in the foyer of the Student Union, and presented a program of song, readings, and poetry in addition to a visiting speaker on Feb. 16.

The formation of the Afro-American Students' Union marks a new chapter in the racial history of the University of Oklahoma and in the black man's search for identity and equality in this nation. In discussing the creation of the union, President Andrews told the audience at the Black Heritage Week program of his conversations with an administration official when he had applied for an organizational charter and had explained the purposes of the group. The administrator told him, "I regret you find the necessity of such an organization at the University." Said Andrews, "I, too, regret its necessity."

Confessions of a Black Student

By Vance Raye

Steady, unconscious indifference can abuse and erode hope as totally as overt hostility

To have learned how to make a virtue of bitterness; to have witnessed the increasing despair of one's black associates; to have endured the steady, persistent disavowal of one's racial identity in the face of an indifference which is more ambiguous, more thorough, and more skillfully underplayed than conscious discrimination; to have felt one's capacity for love being replaced by an

increasingly bitter hate against all white authority to the point where it seems that all whites are engaged in a conspiracy of silence against blacks; to have felt a growing sense of alienation from a society which disvalues all traces of one's culture; to have endured countless "grains" of discrimination and viewed their coalescence into a mosaic of intolerance and prejudice; to have struggled against almost insurmountable feelings of hopelessness and despair at being an "invisible man" in a disconcerted society—this was not what an education meant to me when I was a high-school senior in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

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