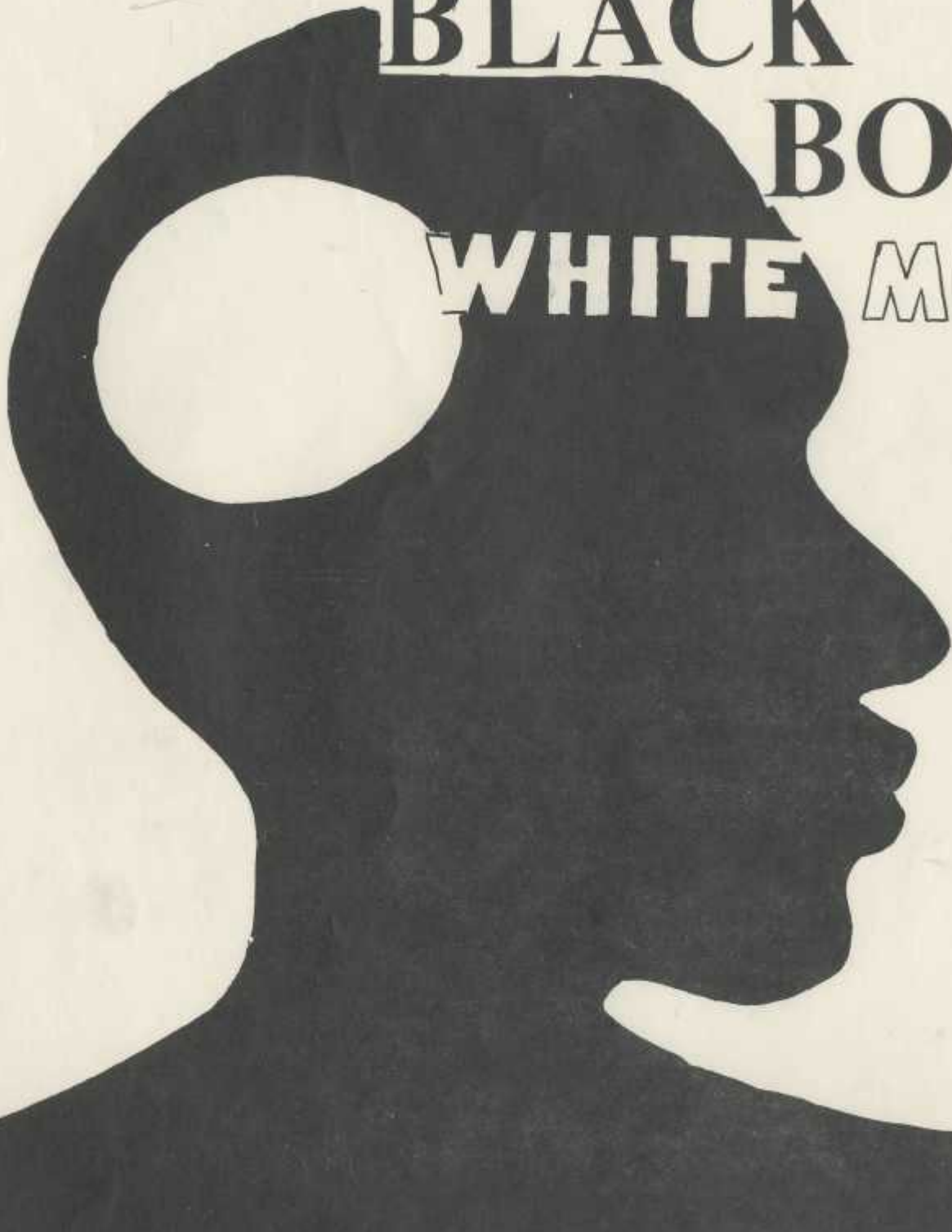


SNCC?

# BLACK BODY WHITE MIND



"COOPERATION-NOT COMPETITION:  
COMMUNITY - NOT THE INDIVIDUAL."

From Poolhall Address  
Delivered at It, Mississippi  
(February 2, 1960)

"Keep your cue-stick chalked."  
-Junebug Jabbo Jones-

Education, as it is now constituted, is a disruptive force to the needs of Afro-Americans and the Afro-American community. To focus on this thesis, it is necessary to discuss the beginnings and history of Negro education.

The first schools black people attended, were slave breaking schools, where black men, women and children, would have their spirits broken in order to make them into obedient servants of their white masters. The history of our education in the United States cannot be separated from this fact.

In Africa, Asia, etc., education grew out of what people had to do in order to survive and the need for one generation to pass on to the next the knowledge acquired through experience. But in America, where white men and black men met, this was not the case. In America, some men were taught to be masters, and others were taught to be slaves.

Mass education in the United States grew out of the need to rationalize racism and exploitation in the United States. It is important to understand this if we are to begin to effectively deal with the problems of education we face today.

The first Negro colleges were set up for the half-breed or "illegitimate" children of white slave owners. The white man understood then, as he does now, the necessity of splintering the Afro-American community. The most effective mechanism for affecting this has been the taught and bred-in orientation towards a white culture projected as superior.

There are many historical examples of how Negro educational institutions have abdicated their responsibilities to the Afro-american community, and embraced the concept of white supremacy. During its early days, Howard University required you to submit a picture of yourself before you were admitted. Of course, the picture established your color credentials. "If white, all right; if black, get back;" along with the "palm test"----the palm of your hand had to come damn close to the color of your face in order for you to get in.

At Fisk University, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were "happy and satisfied", educated darkies, in the finest of white cultural tradition; and to this day, are acclaimed for establishing much of the prominence and validity of Fisk University. They sang before Queen Victoria of Britian (which at that time was the major colonial force oppressing our colonial brothers and sisters around the world----"the sun never sets on the British Empire," "take up the white mans burden" and that sort of rot)----and were acclaimed gret because they sang by white standards (four part harmonies, rounded tones, and proper diction), and didn't pat their feet, shout, and get happy----ya'll know, embarrass the race.

Booker T. Washington, and his policy of accommodation is another example of Negro education. Tuskegee Institute was attempting to provide Negroes with "industrial education". At the beginning of the 20th century, the industrialists who financed Booker T. knew industrial education was not going to do the black man any

good. It was outdated, and could only keep the black man in tasks of menial, servile, labor. Today, there is a statue of Booker T. on Tuskegee's campus, in which he is supposedly raising the veil from over the head of a young Negro who is kneeling. At least some people say that he is raising the veil; probably he is lowering it. But, supposing for the moment that he is raising it, that statue stands as a symbol of the fact of Booker T.'s acceptance of the concept of Afro-americans' inferiority----that Afro-americans had to be raised and unlifted to the level of whites. In other words, Booker T. was a white supremacist (an insidious example of the white war to annihilate feelings of blackness is found in the number of Negro schools named Booker T. Washington).

At every level, the history of our education has been motion towards white standards of culture, or a white posture, which was somehow supposed to be superior. Educated Negroes were set up as a separate class, the model toward which the community should aspire in order to be considered "civilized", or on the way to progress. Negro progress is measured by its closeness to total imitation of the white model.

Another example of the orientation towards whiteness, it reflected in the orientation of freshman males at Howard University. On the first night of residence, freshman males are gathered onto the top of Drew Hall and warned of the dangers of the surrounding community of northwest Washington. "block boys" beat up Howard

if they have to go out at night (to be avoided if possible), try not to go out alone. Avoid community parties. Always, the posture of the university is how to defend yourself from that savage, wild, uncivilized community. They are saying in fact, "you're better than those niggers. You might get your picture in Ebony Magazine."

This is a double tragedy, because 1) Howard University students are subject to all the above dangers. Howard is an alien in what could be a responsive community; and 2) given what it is oriented to, it seems impossible for Howard to change itself in order to become relevant to the needs of the Afro-Americans community around it. Therefore, it stands as a source of frustration in the eyes of the Afro-American community that surrounds it, subject to the hostility that flows from what it (Howard) denies.

Howard is typical of Negro schools. To describe them in terms of what they really are is to call them islands of whiteness in a sea of blackness. These schools relate to the white community, and feed individual Negroes into the white community, that is they teach these individuals how to step on the backs of their black brothers, "up" towards whitey, and/or act as a buffer and transmit the white message and culture into the Afro-American communities. In a real and profound sense, Negro schools are only important as they relate to the white community. They tell the Afro-American people that you are inferior; that you have nothing to offer; that you are not worth giving anything to. Negro educational institutions are very much vulnerable to questions from Afro-Americans as to why they should be allowed to exist if they continue to play such a destructive role in our community.

If we accept the proposition that Negro schools are white-oriented, and geared not to the need of Afro-Americans, but to the needs of white supremacy, then to examine Negro education is also to examine in part the nature of education in this country. The idea of education as a magic key that unlocks the door, that gives you entrance into the chamber, that has the buttons, that runs things, is a myth. The education that we get is designed to keep us in our place. For instance, in October, when Stokely Carmichael was invited to speak at Fisk as a guest lecturer by students involved in the honors program; the white people of Nashville put pressure on acting Fisk President James Lawson to cancel the engagement. Knuckling under to pressure, Lawson cancelled the engagement on the supposition that Carmichael's presence would be disruptive to the campus and the city of Nashville.

We have to understand that education is exclusive. The persons who are educated, or the children of the persons who are educated, have the best chance of being educated. That circle does not expand very much. In white society, class is important to this exclusiveness. In the Negro community, caste and class are key to this exclusiveness. And, as you know, those closest to white are of the highest caste.

Education as a key to running things in the country is also a myth. The country is run informally and the first requirement is not a college degree, but a white skin. How many presidents of major corporations have you seen advertised for? They are bred.

They meet certain social, as well as educational requirements. If they have a college degree, it is because socially, it's required these days. And us scuffling niggers is just out here, believing all the stuff the man says about 'get a degree and work your way up', like the brother in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man who on seeing the contents of an envelope given him by the President of what might be Tuskegee, saw: "Keep this nigger running."

The motion of the so-called civil rights movement around the question of education has been on the assumption that Negro schools were inferior in this society. The facilities were poor for the teachers. The teachers were poor for the students. The students were culturally inferior. Finally, in 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court decided that us poor cullud folks could go to the superior white folks schools. They did it for us, they say, however, in many respects the 1954 Supreme Court decision marks a new stage in the United States program of International Pacification. Faced with a world-wide struggle against western imperialism, the U. S. had to project an appearance of resolving the contradiction between it's claims as a representative of "democracy", and "freedom", and it's domestic policy of racial exploitation. Needless to say, the hypocrisy of that move is reflected today in both the Vietnam war and the situation of Afro-Americans.

The white schools decided to integrate with "all deliberate speed". That is, about 4 or 5 years apart. We were supposed to be most appreciative of this opportunity opened up to us through the "good" graces of white society. Halleluah, we could all go to white schools.



We began to feel as if we had to push as many Negroes as we could into these schools, in order that they get the information that we felt whites were getting. This was vitally necessary to functioning in the white society. The whole Afro-American community was kept in motion, directing our energies towards the responsibilities necessary to allow individuals from our community to function in the white mans society.

Several things happened in regards to this integration effort. There was massive resistance, especially in the south and in the north when we came in great masses. Formerly all-white schools became all black. We began to realize that if we ever wanted to integrate with whites, we would have to chase them all over the country. The south in many instances put up physical resistance. In order to make it easier on the whites, in some northern areas it was proposed that a few black students be bussed out of the ghetto before dark. Sort of a daytime whiteness attempt. And in the south, we were asked to ignore spit in our faces, mobs around our children and bombs thrown at our homes.

On the college level, the effort of Negro colleges is to become as "good" as white and, therefore, schools like Harvard, Yale, etc. are being used to evaluate the needs of Negro education. One result of these kinds of evaluations is that the President of Howard University has recommended that within five to ten years, Howard become 60% white in order to be able to compete with white schools. In essence he was saying that it was impossible for a Negro school--that is a school for those of African descent, a black

school--to measure up to white schools; therefore, these schools must be flooded with whites, who's presence by definition would bring superiority.

Another development in regards to Negro colleges is the concept of pairing. Princeton takes responsibility for Miles, the University of Michigan for Tuskegee, Brown for Tougaloo. These schools would correct standards, design a better curriculum in terms of national educational standards. Whiten them. Brothers and Sisters "First there is a tragedy, then there is a farce".

The deep crisis in education that we face today flows from a much broader and profound political problem that pervades every segment of the black community. In a phrase, we, blacks, control none of the resources and institutions in our communities. And, until we can begin to move to exercise this control over our lives, anything else is an exercise in futility.

Education consists mainly of two factors: indoctrination to a certain point of view (e.g. the slaves were civilized by being brought here; the Indians were savages and destroying them was taming the west); and the accumulation of factual information (e.g. the sun is in the sky - water is wet). However, our indoctrination in many respects determines what is factual. For example, you would laugh if we said that England wasn't discovered until the first time Sekou Toure, President of the African country of Guinea, first set foot there, but we accept the idea of Columbus' discovery of America, despite the fact that people were here to meet him.

Columbus, a poor navigator at best, accidentally got here trying to get to India and he died thinking he had made it to India.

We are only educated in our schools, but the white attitude also breaks into the Afro-American community through television, radio, movies and magazines (both white and white aspiring-dig Ebony); through advertising such as Nadinola, Silky Straight and the white knight that drives out dirt. In fact, we are overwhelmed.

It is safe to say that every device for indoctrination including institutional education is used to lock us mentally within the white prison of western civilization.

If we are to survive, we must break the chains that bind our minds and bodies within the prison of western civilization. We must, therefore, build within our communities, educational institutions that allow us to locate and utilize in our own interests, the resources that we have as a people. This effort, which we must all commit ourselves to, will be resisted, as it has been historically by this country and her sister countries of the West, whose commitment to the protection of white supremacy prevents an understanding of human rights and needs.

We want to begin now, to break out of a very negative concept of ourselves and of our possibilities taught us as a result of our American captivity. We should understand that while there world wide oppression and exploitation along color lines, there is strength for us in the struggle against the oppression. For we, the oppressed, represent 87% of the worlds population.

We have outlined a description of white cultural and educational domination and many of you must be asking by now, how do we deal with this?

How do we move as Afro-Americans to meet our educational needs? Let us begin to think of a school, international in it's scope, yet parochial in that it's aimed at the needs of Afro-Americans colonized within the United States.

The thrust of such a school would be to break out of the mental barriers posed by western (the U.S. in particular) education. There would be a positive and a direct effort to relate to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Language as a basic communications tool, would be very important; emphasis would be put on these languages: Swahili and French in terms of Africa; Spanish in terms of Latin America; Chinese and Japanese in terms of Asia. Coupled with this language learning process would be to travel to countries in these areas to begin to break through the overwhelming mental effect of a life within the American society where every function is controlled by whites.

We need to begin to conceive of our community in a different light. Instead of a place to escape from, we must now see our life, work, labor and love, in terms of that community. With this different attitude towards our community in terms of our life work, we must begin to get specific technical skills directly relevant to the Afro-American community. Specific technical skills gotten by individuals should be seen as community resources rather than individual profit; for true profit for the individual flows from the profit of his community. Medical care and health for example, would be organized as community programs, not as lucrative private practices. Technicians would see as a part of their work, the organizing and encouragement of their communities to tap it's own resources in it's own

For in the final analysis, education is not a gathering of intellectual skills, but a preparation for participation in living; and life is lived with people and community.

Integral to the purpose of this kind of school, is the shedding of our inability to understand in anything other than western cultural standards. The west is not the culture, but a culture; one of many and in many ways more primitive than most.

We, as Afro-Americans, must choose on which side of the color line we stand. We have, in fact, only one choice. The choice is made by the color of our skins.

LET US NOW PREPARE.

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