

# The Ethnic Cleansing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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*Despite the long and loud verbal commitment of the Black Misleadership class to HBCUs, the deference and dependence of black leadership to corporate ethics and on corporate donations has caused them to endorse policies that are effectively phasing out HBCUs. Within a generation we may see the end of historically black institutions of higher learning.*

For more than 100 years, HBCU's<sup>i</sup> have educated African American leadership. Although the mission statements of most HBCUs do not state this fact, HBCUs grew out of the social disorder and aftermath of the American Civil War—a period which constitutionally brought millions of formerly enslaved Africans into citizenry in the United States.

Similar to colleges and universities that were created for religious groups such as Catholics, Jews and for other immigrant groups, HBCUs were created in reaction to de facto marginalization created by a European American hostile society.<sup>ii</sup> Because of the efforts of the Civil Right Movement, HBCU's were finally recognized as important institutions and were giving special status for Federal funding. However, over the past few decades, HBCUs have been targeted as being too "Black" and many states are progressively trying to eliminate African Americans from these institutions that have served as a buffer zone for the Black middle class. Some HBCUs have and are going through hostile takeovers in order to turn them into White education facilities and thereby permanently eliminating the African American middle class.

## African American Perform Better at HBCUs



Although over the years many have argued that HBCUs are redundant and irrelevant in today's "post racial world," the fact remains that these intuitions of higher learning, according to the National Science Foundation, graduate more than 33% of all African Americans earning Bachelor's and doctoral degrees, almost double that compared to African Americans attending predominately White schools.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, according to the Washington Post, the "post racial" world that many hoped for with the election of President Barack Obama may just be an illusion.<sup>iv</sup> Relying on a recent report from the Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends, the Washington Post noted that the typical White household in 2009 had 20 times more wealth (\$113,149) than the typical Black household (\$5,677). Moreover, another report that was conducted by Brandeis University in

May of 2010 and concluded that African American will never reach wealth parity with that of White Americans.<sup>v</sup> Both reports note that African Americans with college degrees stand a better chance at edging out a decent life in the United States than those without degrees.

According to a 1977 study that was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Mary Francis Berry, in her capacity as the former Secretary of Education in the Carter Administration, primary reasons why HBCUs tended to be better equipped to prepare students for real world experience was because they offered:

- “credible models for aspiring Blacks...
- “psycho-socially congenial settings in which blacks can develop”
- “insurance against a potentially declining interest in the education of black folk”

Furthermore, the report posits that the ultimate purpose of the HBCU is to “represent the formal structures which nurture and stress racial ideology, pride and worth for Blacks. Consequently, they are what every racial and ethnic group is entitled to have—a political, social and intellectual haven.”<sup>vi</sup> The report mentioned above was recently vindicated in a study that was published in January of 2011. Three economists concluded that African Americans who attend HBCUs tend to perform better in the work force than African Americans who attend predominately White universities and colleges.<sup>vii</sup>

#### The 1965 Higher Education Act and Title III: Federal Funding For African-Americans in Higher Education

One cannot discuss today’s relevancy of HBCU’s without mentioning the Higher Education Act of 1965. The Higher Education Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his Great Society program that sought “to strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities and to provide financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education.” Before the law was signed by President Johnson, the Chairman of the House Committee on Education, an African-American Harlem Congressman named Adam Clayton Powell made an amendment that defined HBCUs as “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans.”<sup>viii</sup> The amendments also legalized the federal funding of HBCUs through the Higher Education Act of 1965 Title III program. Title III is the federal governing body which sets the standard for providing funding for HBCUs. Over the years Title III had provided billions of dollars to support African-American undergraduate, graduate programs, increasing African American participation in math and science, real estate acquisitions and strengthen HBCU’ endowments to name a few.<sup>ix</sup> In all, Title III has helped African American universities to not only increase their numbers in accredited degree programs across the country; it has also allowed many HBCUs to have a tremendous economic impact in the communities that they serve.

#### Economic Impact of HBCUs and the Origins of a New and Corrupt Era

In 2005 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an office within the U.S. Department of Education, published a report that documented the economic impact of HBCUs. Primarily, this study was introduced by President George W. Bush and continued by President Barack Obama administration which sought to include the participation of private sector (corporations) into the governing bodies of HBCUs.<sup>x</sup> The study found that more than

100 HBCUs had in 2001 an economic impact of almost 11 billion dollars in the communities that they served. For instance, schools such as Howard University total economic impact in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area was more than 600 million dollars.

For smaller schools such as Delaware State University, their total economic impact was more than 150 million dollars. It must be noted that the economic impacts also made a national impression. Again, according to the National Science Foundation, HBCUs bestowed nearly 25% of all bachelor degrees earned by African Americans in 2001. In the areas of agriculture, biology, mathematics and the physical sciences, HBCUs accounted for more than 40 percent of all bachelor degrees earned by African-Americans.<sup>xi</sup> With this stated, it is easy to see why corporations would want a piece of the pie. Furthermore, if one is to evaluate the current lack of transparency on Wall Street, it is easy to see that Wall Street's collaboration with today's HBCUs could represent the end of African American higher education as we know it.

### The Second Corporate Takeover

Although President Barack Obama HBCU Executive Order 13532 "encourages private investment in HBCUs," however, research proves that corporate partnerships is not new to HBCUs, nor are their historic input solely motivated by financial gains.<sup>xii</sup> Not long after the end of reconstruction, Northern White capitalist sought extreme ways in which they could control the ebb and flow of African American education. This was done to curtail the rapid development of African American educational institutions immediately after the Civil War. For instance, from 1865-1880 federal agents documented that there were thousands of African American schools operating throughout the South independent of White control.

When northern White benevolent groups finally reach the South with mythical-preconceived notions that they were coming to "civilize" former wretched enslaved Africans, they were astonished to see that Africans Americans had already had established their own schools systems fully equipped with African American teachers. These schools full missions were self-determination and political control over the regions of the South in which they were the majority.<sup>xiii</sup>

The high level of African American political education created a problem for the nation after the Compromise of 1877. Since African Americans were no longer allowed to exercise political autonomy in the South, strategies were devised on the federal level to control the nature of their education. The federal government along with the corporate conglomerates in the North believed that the only way that they could ensure the continual flow of cheap labor in the South was to train African Americans in a way that they would not advocate for political control of their communities.

Furthermore, there was another important issue at play—that was African American competition with Whites for high skilled jobs. The solution was a new type of training for Southern African Americans was called industrial education. This type of schooling served the purpose of supervising and training African American to be subservient to White interest.<sup>xiv</sup> Schools such as Hampton, Tuskegee and Delaware State were devised as the alternative to the African American independent schools that advocated self-determination after the Civil War. The corporate-handpicked spokesman for this new type of schooling was none other than Booker T. Washington. One must remember that Washington's entrance

exam into Hampton University was sweeping the floor.

The ultimate goal of Hampton was to control the emerging Black leadership of the Jim Crow South, and train African Americans in the corporate labor needs of the new South.<sup>xv</sup> The financial backing of Hampton University and what would later be Tuskegee was provided by White Northern corporations and philanthropy. This corporate-industrial style form of education continued to dominate Southern higher educational institutions long after the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915.<sup>xvi</sup>

#### The White House Initiative on HBCUs Encourages Corporate Collaboration

The current encroachment of private corporate input into the affairs of African American higher education could and will be disastrous. It would mean that African Americans will be forced back into the Jim Crow Era. A deliberate attempt to curtail educational advancements that was gained by the Civil Rights and Black Power era seems to be the main motivation. The White House Advisor on HBCUs, John Wilson, Jr., stated in April of 2010 HBCUs “must not be seen as plaintiffs in the struggle for civil rights....”<sup>xvii</sup> Dr. Wilson, a graduate of Morehouse University, tends to forget that it was struggle for Civil Rights that literally allows him to serve President Barack Obama. The White House Initiative on HBCUs came into existence because of the “plaintiff” of the past.

Furthermore, Mr. Wilson’s statement implies that African American should abandon their pursuit for full rights and self-interest. Taking a lead from Dr. Wilson’s statements, A Wall Street Journal editor named Jason L. Liley wrote an editorial stating that HBCU’s were a dismal failure and that “Mr. Obama ought to use the federal government’s leverage” to bring these schools under Wall Street’s control. He went further by stating that HBCUs should all become private and model themselves after the University of Phoenix.<sup>xviii</sup> One month after Liley’s editorial, a conservative from the Wall Street funded American Enterprise Institute also imputed on Wall Street’s quest to control Black education. He ended his article in the Chronicle of Higher Education by stating that HBCUs “should accordingly be encouraged to enroll more non-black students.” The author mentioned nothing about White universities increasing African American enrollment. He also stated that “some HBCUs, notably two in West Virginia (Bluefield State and West Virginia State University), are in fact no longer predominantly black” but are still receiving special (HBCU) federal funding.<sup>xix</sup>

Five months after the Chronicle of Higher Education essay appeared, the White House Advisor on HBCUs, John Wilson, Jr. was invited as the keynote speaker to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. The title of his speech “Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the Albatross<sup>xx</sup> of Undignified Publicity” conveyed that HBCU are historically cursed when it comes to publicity in White dominated media outlets. Moreover, the central thesis of his speech, although impressively constructed, was that HBCUs should jump on the corporate bandwagon by accepting funds from good corporate Samaritans such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffett.<sup>xxi</sup>

#### Black Colleges & White Cultural Hegemony: The Signs of the Future

Although the Higher Education Act of 1965 clearly states that an HBCU is a school “whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans,” economist and scholar at

American Enterprise Institute, Richard Vedder, reminds us that there is a trend being shaped where as HBCUs who formally had an African American majority student and faculty body, and now have White majority populations, still receive federal funding geared for African Americans.

These two schools are Bluefield State College and West Virginia State University. According to a May 19, 2000 CNN report, White enrollment at HBCUs is on the rise. Other schools such as Kentucky State University, Elizabeth City State University and Delaware State University are only a few schools that have a growing White and non-African American student and faculty population. Furthermore, according to an August 17, 2011 Wall Street Journal article called "Recruiters at Black Colleges Break From Tradition," HBCUs such as Tennessee State University, Delaware State University and Paul Quinn College are cited as no longer focusing exclusively on recruiting African Americans. The author of the article points out that Tennessee State University's Black enrollment has reduced to around 70 %, while Paul Quinn College Black enrollment has been predicted to fall from 94% to 85% for the Fall 2011 academic year.<sup>xxii</sup>

Many have asked the question if White enrollment at HBCUs represent a decrease in African American enrollment at the same schools. The year that CNN published its story, Blue field College African American faculty had dwindled to less than one percent from previous decades. The African American student enrollment had also decreased to less than ten percent. Nonetheless, research shows that when African American faculty at HBCUs is a majority, African American students tend to enroll at a higher percentage and they tend to be more productive in the work place once they graduate. There seems to be a direct correlation between African American student enrollment and that of its faculty. In other words, if the African American faculty enrollment at HBCU's is low, African American students tend not to attend HBCU's. When this occurs, is an HBCU still a HBCU? In other words, can you have a HBCU without Black students and faculty? This is exactly the issue that American Enterprise Institute scholar Richard Vedder was raising in his essay in the Chronicle of Higher Learning. Why are HBCUs that are no longer Black in students or faculty population receiving federal monies geared toward African Americans? The federal government seems to believe that this trend represents the future for HBCUs.

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*Times:*[http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/05/05/us/politics/20080505\\_RALEIGH\\_SLIDES\\_HOW\\_index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/05/05/us/politics/20080505_RALEIGH_SLIDES_HOW_index.html)

## Notes

i Historically Black Colleges and Universities are institutions founded primarily for African Americans.

ii The United States Department of Education, Record Group 441, National Archives and Records Administration, National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, (1979). National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities was the precursor to the White House Initiative on HBCU

established by President Jimmy Carter in 1976 and signed into law in 1980.

iii Joan Burrelli and Alan Rapoport, "The Role of HBCUs as Baccalaureate-Origin Institutions of Black S&E Doctorate Recipients", National Science Foundation Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences, (2008).

iv "Hard hit in recession, Blacks still hopeful," The Washington Post, July 28, 2011.

v The Pew Research

Center: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2069/housing-bubble-subprime-mortgages-hispanics-blacks-household-wealth-disparity>; The Guardian, May 17, 2010.

vi National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, The United States Department of Education, "Black Colleges and Universities:" An Essential Component of a Diverse System of Higher Education," p. 27. Although not widely known, Dr. Mary Frances Berry, when she was Assistant Secretary for Education, was responsible for convincing President Jimmy Carter to sign an executive order that brought about the White House Initiative on Historical Black Colleges and Universities. This was done as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Struggle during the 1960-70s.

vii Gregory N. Price, William Spriggs and Omari H. Swinton, "The Relative to Graduating from a Historically Black College/University: Propensity Score Matching Estimates from the National Survey of Black Americans", Review of Black political Economy (2011) 38.

viii Higher Education Act of 1965, H.R. 621, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (1965); Higher Education Act of 1965, S.673, 89th Cong., 1st Sess.(1965); Higher Education Act of 1965, Pub. L . No. 89-329 (1965); Vol. 111 Cong. Record (1965) 883, 978, 17367;

ix See the United States Department of Education's website on Title III and its specific programs for African- Americans and HBCU's:  
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/ideshbggi/index.html>

x The input of private sector or corporation into the governing affairs of HBCU's was first initiated by President George H.W. Bush in 1989. See The President's HBCU Board of Advisors Report : <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/hbcu-report-2007.pdf>

xi The National Center for Educational Statistics: "The Economic Impact of the Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities," <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007178.pdf>

xii President Barack Obama's Executive Order 136532, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-exec-order.html>

xiii James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935, (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 1-32. xiv Donald Spivey, Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915, ( Trenton, 2007) pp. 69-90.



xv It must be pointed out that Washington was vehemently opposed by a plethora of mainstream African American leaders.

xvi Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: The Black College Rebellion of the 1920s* (Princeton, 1975) p. 3-30. It must be pointed out that the corporate domination of these institutions were able to control the ebb and flow of African American education for more than seventy years.

xvii *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2010.

xviii Jason L. Riley, 'Black Colleges Need a New Mission', *The Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2010. It must be noted that a plethora of HBCU presidents denounced Riley's article. See The National Association of Equal Opportunity in Higher Education website: [http://www.nafeo.org/community/web2010/news\\_vedder.html](http://www.nafeo.org/community/web2010/news_vedder.html)

xix Richard Vedder, 'Why Do We Have HBCUs?' *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 15, 2010.

xx The word "Albatross" means an "omen of bad luck, as well as a metaphor for a burden to be carried."

xxi Several HBCUs have already announced their corporate collaborations. See entire speech at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/jsw-tmcf-hbcu-defense-3-111-dh.pdf>

xxii See the Wall Street Journal " <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903480904576512372651069468.html>

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