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THE BLACK REVOLUTION AND THE
ECONOMIC FUTURE OF NEGROES IN THE
UNITED STATES

A Commencement Address

By

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Federal Reserve System

At

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I was pleased and flattered to receive the invitation to address this graduating class in the 57th year of Tennessee A. and I. University. I accepted on the assumption that -- despite the ferment surrounding the quest for change on the college campuses of our nation -- it is not only still possible but essential to carry on a sane and unsentimental discussion of the prospects for progress in American society. Since my own perspective on this society is derived primarily from the experience of an economist, I will focus on the outlook for the economy over the next decade. And since Negroes constitute the vast majority of this graduating class and of this University, I will place particular stress on the unfolding opportunities for equal participation which our expanding economy can be expected to provide.

But before turning to that task, let me hasten to carry out those duties which any commencement speaker is expected to perform: on this occasion -- marking for most of you the completion of your formal educational experience and the beginning of life in the world beyond the campus -- I commend all of you for your accomplishments to date. Partly because of the enormous strides in college enrollment made in recent years, we tend to forget that Negro college graduates are still much more rare

*Member, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. I am indebted to Mr. Henry Terrell and Miss Mary Ann Graves of the Board's staff for assistance in the preparation of this remarks.

than the Negro's share of our total population would suggest. We tend to forget that, among Negroes age 21 and over, less than one-in-twenty has four years or more of college education -- compared with more than one-in-ten for the population as a whole. I am aware of -- and I fully appreciate -- the considerable sacrifices which you and your families have made along the road to this ceremony. I must also reassure you (because you obviously already know) that the world beyond the campus is not only exciting and challenging -- but it desperately needs the help of all the bright minds and vigorous bodies it can get. So let me join in welcoming you to this exhilarating venture.

However, in these times of trouble in our country -- and in the world at large -- it would be an insult for a commencement speaker to dwell on empty generalities. Since I have come to praise you and not to insult you, I will refrain from any further obeisance to ritual or rhetoric. Instead, let me return to the central theme of these remarks.

I am certain that I do not need to remind this audience of the turmoil currently sweeping our society. I am sure that you would agree with me that we are not simply being plagued by a rash of bitter and violent disorders without cause, meaning or goals. Rather, we are witnesses to -- and in many instances warriors in -- a campaign aimed at a fundamental reformation of American society. Some call it a revolution. Moreover, I know that it is not necessary for me to emphasize that at the core of the drive to reform our society (no matter what other elements may be stressed from time-to-time) is the pervasive and agonizing question of

race. Thus, no matter what other adjectives we may use to characterize the vigorous quest for change, we must also describe it as a black revolution -- a basic upheaval about the role of race in this country.

I could easily consume all of the allotted time by simply reciting the catalogue of ills which underlie the patina of racial equality and which render the United States a racist society. But you know this catalogue. Whatever index of social and economic conditions we choose (education, employment, housing, health, etc.) tells the same story: the legacy of racial discrimination and segregation is real, and the scars it has inflicted on all our citizens are deep and enduring. But undoubtedly the most corrosive burden has been borne by the American Negro for more than three hundred years. So, I could easily devote all of my remarks to a passionate condemnation of the conditions which foster racial strife in this country. I could easily dwell on the mosaic of urban disorganization and decay -- equally inlaid with poverty, segregation and racial conflict.

If I were to adopt either course, I would certainly be in step with the typical speaker before any predominantly black audience today. However, I have chosen to travel a different route. But, so that I will not be misunderstood, let me say that it should be obvious to anyone that I am unalterably opposed to any kind of racial discrimination or segregation in whatever form it may appear. I have heard no convincing reasons as to why we must continue to suffer the steady deterioration of our cities or tolerate the persistence of poverty in the most prosperous land in the

world. So I fully appreciate the need -- and support strongly the efforts -- to press on with these unfinished tasks.

I have chosen a somewhat different approach in these comments because I believe we should pause from time-to-time to take stock of the distance we have already covered and to survey the terrain ahead. Only by such periodic checks can we be sure to stick to our main route and avoid digressing into byways and blind passages which can lead only to disappointment and frustration. In this stock-taking, first I review the extent of economic progress the Negro has actually made in recent years. This is followed by an appraisal of the economic outlook over the next decade. Finally, I try to flag several of the deceptively inviting digressions which are luring some of our most promising young people with false hopes of progress through separate development along racial lines. My main theme can be summarized briefly:

- So far in the decade of the 1960's, Negroes have benefited relatively more than the population as a whole from the vigorous expansion of the national economy. However, increased occupational mobility and significant strides in education have also played vital roles.
- Reflecting these favorable trends, the income differentials between blacks and whites have narrowed appreciably in the last few years, with the greatest relative gains by Negroes being among those with the highest levels of education. Simultaneously, however, within the Negro community, two different classes are becoming increasingly evident as the best prepared are moving ahead rapidly while the least prepared are lagging behind.

- Looking ahead over the next decade, the Negro community as a whole can be expected to improve its economic position to a greater extent than the population generally. Again, while expansion of the national economy is expected to be the mainspring of this improvement, continued advances in education will also play a major part.

- Unfortunately, at exactly the time when education and technical competence are becoming increasingly critical for Negroes -- as for other Americans -- the notion is spreading that black students need not concern themselves with most of the content of a traditional college curriculum. Instead, it is being held -- in even some of the very best institutions -- that the most relevant educational experiences for black students are those which will equip them to return to the urban ghettos and work exclusively for the improvement of the black community. In my judgment, it is a serious error for college faculties to allow such notions to go unchallenged. But, what is even more tragic, on numerous campuses Negro students -- mainly in response to their own demands -- are being permitted -- and in some cases encouraged -- to enroll in sheltered workshops in the guise of "black studies" and "Afro-American" programs. Thus, on the mistaken assumption that they are being relevant and responsive, many of our college faculties are creating facilities which may cripple young people rather than strengthen their ability to compete in an economy of expanding opportunities.

Recent Economic Progress in the Black Community

During the decade of the 1960's, Negroes have made sizable economic gains -- although they still lag well behind the population as a whole. This

progress is evident whether defined in terms of employment, changing occupational characteristics, education or income.

For example, between 1960 and 1967, nonwhite employment (more than 90 per cent of which is made up of Negroes) rose more rapidly than in the country at large. In 1960, nonwhites held 7 million (or 10.5 per cent) of the more than 66 million civilian jobs then in existence. By 1967, total civilian employment exceeded 74 million, and nonwhite employment had risen to 8 million. Thus, while total employment increased by 11-1/2 per cent, that for nonwhites rose by 14 per cent. Over these seven years, the rise in the number of jobs held by nonwhites accounted for 12.6 per cent of the expansion in total employment.

The occupational distribution of employed Negroes has also **changed somewhat** during the current decade. Their gains have been particularly striking in professional and technical fields, in clerical work, in semi-skilled factory jobs, and in nonhousehold service tasks. Skilled craftsmen occupations among nonwhites have also risen somewhat faster than their total employment. In contrast, the number of nonwhites engaged as **managers**, officials and proprietors have expanded more slowly than total nonwhite employment. To a considerable extent, the occupational upgrading among nonwhites has paralleled an absolute decline in their employment as private household workers, as farmers and farm workers, and as nonfarm laborers. In general -- and what is much more important -- in those occupations where total employment is growing most rapidly, the rate of growth of nonwhite

employment has been even faster; and in those occupations where total employment is declining, nonwhites are showing an even swifter decline.

Nevertheless, nonwhites are still heavily concentrated in low-skilled, low-paying occupations. To some extent, this partly reflects educational deficiencies and the absence of skills of a sizable proportion of the Negro population. On the other hand, it is also partly due to racial discrimination and limited access to job opportunities. This is clearly indicated by a recent estimate prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of what the occupational structure for white and nonwhite men would be if "... at each given education level Negroes had the same opportunity for employment as white workers." If this greater occupational equality were to exist, the largest relative percentage gains for nonwhites would occur among craftsmen (the proportion of which would just about double) and among managers and proprietors (where a three-fold increase might be registered). The relative proportion of service workers would be cut by one-half, and the percentage of nonfarm laborers would decline by two-thirds. Little change would be expected to occur in the proportion of nonwhite men employed in professional and technical occupations.

Trends in Personal Income

Reflecting these favorable trends in employment and occupations, the personal income of nonwhites has risen substantially in both absolute and relative terms. In 1959, the median income of nonwhite families was \$2,917; by 1967, this had risen to \$5,141 -- a gain of 76 per cent. For

all families, median income climbed from \$5,417 in 1959 to \$7,974 in 1967, an increase of 47 per cent. For white families, the corresponding figures were \$5,643 in 1959 and \$8,274 in 1967, also a rise of 47 per cent. Over these years, the ratio of nonwhite to white median family income rose from 52 per cent to 62 per cent with a particularly sharp rise occurring after 1965 (when the ratio was 55 per cent).

In fact, the last few years have brought noticeable improvement in the income position of Negroes looked at apart from other nonwhites. For example, in 1965 the median family income of Negroes stood at 54 per cent of that for white families. By 1967, the median family income of Negroes amounted to \$4,939, and that for white families was \$8,318. Thus, the ratio had risen to 59 per cent. So, in three years, Negroes had managed to narrow the gap by 5 percentage points -- or by roughly 11 per cent.

The improvement in income was spread rather evenly throughout all regions of the country. The narrowest gap between white and Negro family incomes was found in the North Central region. In these states the median income for Negroes in 1967 amounted to \$6,540, compared with \$8,414 for whites -- a ratio of 78 per cent; in 1965 the ratio was 74 per cent. In the South, the median income for white families in 1967 stood at \$7,448 and that for Negroes at \$3,992 -- for a Negro-white ratio of 54 per cent, compared with 49 per cent in 1965. In passing, it might be noted that not only do median incomes of both white and Negro families in the South lag behind the incomes of both groups, respectively, in the rest of the nation, but the greatest disparity between Negro and white family income among regions is also found in the South.

Undoubtedly, one of the prime factors underlying the improvement in the income position of the Negro community in the nation as a whole is the continued progress being made in education. For example, in 1967 the median years of school completed by nonwhite men (who were 18 years of age and over and who were in the labor force) stood at 10.2 years; for white men the corresponding number was 12.3 years, a difference of 1.9 years. However, in 1957, the median years of schooling for nonwhite men were 8.0 years, and for white men the figure was 11.5 years, a gap of 3.5 years. In fact, by 1962, the gap was still 3.1 years, so progress has been particularly rapid within the current decade when the differential has been cut by almost one-half. Among nonwhite women, educational progress has been even more marked. In 1967, the median years of school completed by nonwhite women in the labor force were 11.5 years, compared with 12.4 years for white women -- a difference of only 0.9 years. In 1957, the corresponding figures were 8.9 years for nonwhite females and 12.2 years for white females, a gap of 2.3 years. In 1962, the measures stood at 10.5 years for nonwhite women and at 12.3 years for white women, a difference of 1.8 years. Thus, within this decade the educational attainment of nonwhite women has converged even more sharply than that of nonwhite men on their respective counterparts. In citing these trends, I am not implying that the quality of the education obtained by whites and nonwhites is equally good. We know that the opposite is generally true. Nevertheless, improvements in education have made a difference in the relative income gains won by nonwhites.

Just how much difference improvements in education can make can be traced in the changes in the median incomes of Negro and white men, classified by years of schooling completed, who were living in large cities in 1959 and 1967. The figures (from the Bureau of the Census) are as follows:

| Years of Schooling | <u>Median Income: Negro Men</u> | | <u>Percentage Increase</u> | <u>Median Income: White Men</u> | | <u>Percentage Increase</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| | <u>1959</u> | <u>1967</u> | | <u>1959</u> | <u>1967</u> | |
| Elementary: | | | | | | |
| 8 yrs or less | \$3,428 | \$4,215 | 23 | \$5,139 | \$6,454 | 10 |
| High School: | | | | | | |
| 1 - 3 yrs | 4,059 | 5,086 | 25 | 5,788 | 7,495 | 17 |
| 4 yrs | 4,323 | 5,642 | 31 | 6,265 | 8,188 | 20 |
| College: | | | | | | |
| 1 yr or more | 5,022 | 7,025 | 40 | 7,686 | 10,499 | 20 |
| 4 yrs or more | n.a. | 7,556 | n.a. | 8,486 | 11,536 | 21 |

Several conclusions can be drawn from these data. Between 1959 and 1967, the higher the level of education, the more rapid was the rise in median income for both Negro and white men. However, the relative increases for Negroes were 1-1/2 to 2 times as large as those achieved by white men. In 1959, Negro men with 8 years or less of schooling had a median income equal to about 70 per cent of that for Negro men who had 1 year or more of college; by 1967, the ratio had fallen to 60 per cent. For

white men in the same circumstances, the income ratio declined from 67 per cent to 61 per cent. In 1967, men with only an elementary school education had median incomes just over half those earned by those in their respective races who had completed 4 years or more of college. During the decade of the 1960's, white men with high school educations pulled away somewhat, in relative income terms, from those who went only to grade school, and they just about maintained unchanged the gap between themselves and white men who went to college. Among Negro men, those with high school educations also pulled away, in relative income terms, from Negro men who went only to elementary school; however, the gap between their incomes and the incomes of Negro men who went to college widened further, as the ratio declined from 86 per cent to 80 per cent.

Thus, in general, these data clearly demonstrate that income for whites and Negroes has been rising most rapidly for those with college educations. Among Negroes, the gains -- in both absolute and relative terms -- have been the greatest at the highest levels of education.

In fact, there appears to have emerged a general tendency for income differentials within the Negro community to widen in recent years. In contrast, within the white community, income differentials seem to have remained unchanged or narrowed slightly. These tendencies can be traced in the Bureau of the Census data showing the percentage share of aggregate income received by each fifth of families, ranked by income and by the color of the family head. The figures for selected years are as follows:

| <u>Families</u> | <u>1959</u> | <u>1962</u> | <u>1965</u> | <u>1967</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>White</u> | | | | |
| <u>Per cent</u> | | | | |
| Lowest fifth | 5.5 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 5.8 |
| Second fifth | 12.6 | 12.4 | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| Middle fifth | 17.8 | 17.6 | 17.5 | 17.5 |
| Fourth fifth | 23.4 | 23.5 | 23.4 | 23.5 |
| Highest fifth | 40.8 | 41.1 | 40.8 | 40.7 |
| Top 5 per cent | 16.1 | 16.0 | 15.5 | 14.9 |
| <u>Nonwhite</u> | | | | |
| <u>Per cent</u> | | | | |
| Lowest fifth | 3.9 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 4.4 |
| Second fifth | 9.6 | 10.4 | 10.7 | 10.4 |
| Middle fifth | 16.5 | 16.6 | 16.5 | 16.4 |
| Fourth fifth | 25.1 | 24.4 | 24.7 | 24.1 |
| Highest fifth | 44.9 | 44.2 | 43.5 | 44.7 |
| Top 5 per cent | 16.4 | 16.3 | 15.5 | 17.5 |

In examining these data, the first thing to note is that the distribution of income is by no means equal in either the white or non-white community. If it were, each fifth of the families would receive 20 per cent of the aggregate income in each year. In reality, however, only those families around and just above the middle of the distribution come close to receiving approximately this proportion of the total income. The families constituting the lowest fifth receive between 4 per cent and 6 per cent of the income, while those in the highest fifth receive over 40 per cent of the total. This general pattern of income distribution holds for both white and nonwhite families.

But looking beyond these overall characteristics, it will also be observed that, within the nonwhite community, the distribution of income

is considerably more unequal. Among nonwhites, from the lowest through the middle fifth, for each of the years shown, the proportion of aggregate money income received by the families in each category is below that for the white community. The opposite is true for nonwhite families above the middle fifth; their share is greater than that received by white families in the same category. The same tendency is evident when the top 5 per cent of the families with the highest incomes in both groups are compared.

Moreover, in the last few years, incomes within the nonwhite community have apparently become even more unequally distributed. The shares of income received by those households at or below the middle fifth of families have been eroded slightly, while the shares received by the highest fifth and by the top 5 per cent have edged up somewhat. In the white community, the opposite tendencies are evident.

Again, these figures seem to underline a conviction held by an increasing number of observers: a basic schism has developed in the black community, and it may be widening year-by-year. Whatever explanation one may offer to explain it, in my opinion, the differential impact of educational progress within the Negro community must be accorded considerable weight.

Economic Outlook for the American Negro

At this point, we can take up the second task sketched above: an assessment of the economic prospects for the American Negro over the next decade. In trying to look ahead, however, I must emphasize that I fully recognize the hazards of attempting to forecast economic activity.

To make such a forecast is not my principal objective. Rather, my chief purpose is to appraise the implications for Negroes of a number of economic trends which are already clearly visible. For example, we have a good indication of the most likely trends in population and labor force participation over the next decade. Moreover, given a few reasonable assumptions about the overall rate of economic growth, we can be fairly certain of the trends in the level and occupational distribution of employment, and the level and distribution of personal income between the white and black communities.

Population Trends

Our firmest estimates are for the population. The Negro will continue to be a larger proportion of the population, reaching a total of approximately 32.5 million in 1980. This would represent an increase of 10.5 million, or 48 per cent, from 1968. The total population has been projected by the Bureau of the Census at about 243 million in 1980, a gain of 45 million, or 23 per cent over 1968. Thus, the Negro population is expected to account for nearly one-quarter of the net increase in the Nation's population during the period 1968-1980, lifting the Negro proportion from 11 per cent of the total in 1968 to 13.4 per cent in 1980. These projections assume lower fertility than currently. However, the rate of decrease in fertility is expected to occur mainly among the white population. The result is a divergence in the rate of population growth for the two groups.

Outlook for the Labor Force

For the present discussion, the proportion of the population which is working or seeking work holds the most interest. During the next decade, the labor force participation rate for nonwhites is expected to remain essentially unchanged at approximately 60 per cent. On this assumption, about 12.2 million nonwhites would be in the labor force in 1980, compared with 9.1 million in 1968. This represents an expansion of roughly one-third, compared with about one-quarter between 1956 and 1968. Since the total labor force in 1980 might be in the neighborhood of 101 million, nonwhites would constitute 12 per cent of the work force by the end of the next decade compared with 11.0 per cent in 1968.

This large growth in the total labor force and the even faster increase for Negroes will be accompanied by several dramatic changes in composition. For instance, over 23.7 million members of the labor force are expected to be under 25 years of age in 1980, a significantly higher proportion than in 1968. Thus, although more and more young people will undoubtedly want to work in order to continue in school in the next decade, the influx into the full-time work force of teen-agers clearly will be substantial. Moreover, an increasing proportion of these teen-agers will be nonwhites. This prospect will pose a continuous challenge to the Nation to provide appropriate employment opportunities at decent wages. But it will also put a heavy burden on Negro youths to acquire marketable skills. As we know, the impact of unemployment among teen-agers -- and especially among nonwhite teen-agers -- has been particularly severe. For

example, while the unemployment rate of the total labor force was down to 3.6 per cent in 1968, it was still 12.6 per cent for all teen-agers and 24.9 per cent for nonwhite youth. There will also be sharp increases in the number of adult women in the labor force. By 1980, it is estimated that there will be about 7 million more women working or looking for work than in 1968, a large proportion of whom will be searching for full-time work.

Trends in Output and Income, 1968-1980

By 1980 the United States will have a \$1.4 trillion economy if it grows in real terms at an average annual rate of 4 per cent. This would represent an increase of 50 per cent in the real output of goods and services in the 1970's. Expressed in per capita terms, Gross National Product (GNP) would be about \$5,650 in 1980 against \$4,274 last year -- thus, rising by about one-third during this period.

For our purpose we would like to know what the growth of output implies for Negroes. However, we have no direct way to identify their share of GNP. On the other hand, we do have a fairly good measure of aggregate money income earned by Negroes as defined by the Bureau of the Census. This series does distinguish between income recipients according to color. In 1967, aggregate money income as measured by this series amounted to \$487 billion. Of this amount, \$451 billion was earned by the white population, and \$35.7 billion was received by nonwhites, representing 7.3 per cent of the total. In 1956 the income of the nonwhite population amounted to \$14 billion or 5.7 per cent of the total. During recent years the share of

aggregate money income received by nonwhites has been increasing. If we assume that the same annual increase in the proportion received by nonwhites during the period 1956-1967 continues during the next decade, nonwhites would receive about 8.8 per cent of aggregate money income in 1980. If present overall trends continue, aggregate money income might amount to \$843 billion in 1980, expressed in 1968 prices. The division might be \$769 billion accruing to the white population and \$74 billion accruing to nonwhites.

Thus, during the 1970's, sizable gains will undoubtedly be registered in the aggregate money income of nonwhites as well as for whites. But the relative improvement for nonwhites would probably be substantially greater. This can be seen most clearly when the income figures are expressed in per capita terms. In 1967 aggregate money income per head was \$2,460; it was \$2,590 for whites and \$1,510 for nonwhites. By 1980 the total may rise to \$3,465 per capita. The corresponding figures for whites and nonwhites may be about \$3,648 and \$2,277, respectively. Consequently, for whites aggregate money income might increase by 40 per cent; but for nonwhites, the gain in per capita terms might be as much as 50 per cent.

Occupational Changes and the Demand for Skills

Behind this outlook for employment and income are significant prospective changes in the economy's demand for skills. These forthcoming changes will have serious implications for Negroes. For example, if nonwhite

continue to gain in the 1970's at the pace recorded during the last decade, their occupational distribution in 1980 will be substantially different from what it is today. While nonwhites might constitute about 12 per cent of the total labor force in 1980, they may hold over 10 per cent of the professional and technical jobs compared with just under 6 per cent in 1967. They may have also raised their share of the managerial, official and proprietary occupations from 2.8 per cent in 1967 to nearly 4 per cent in 1980. Sizable gains probably would also have been recorded in the clerical, sales and craftsmen occupations. They might continue to provide about the same proportion of farm workers and laborers, while a noticeable decline may have occurred in the proportion of service jobs held by them.

These changes would also have a striking impact on the distribution of occupations within the nonwhite community. For instance, professional and technical workers in 1975 might constitute about 12 per cent of the nonwhite labor force compared with 7.4 per cent in 1967. The ratio probably will have risen further by 1980. While this proportion in 1975 would still be below the 15 per cent expected for whites in the same year, the relative shift is unmistakable. The managerial group might account for about 3 per cent of the nonwhite labor force in 1975 compared with 2.6 per cent in 1967. Here also the percentage can be expected to climb further by 1980. A substantially higher proportion of the nonwhite labor force probably also would be employed in the clerical and sales fields. As already indicated, most of the relative shift will be away from the

blue-collar and unskilled occupations. The expected decline among nonfarm laborers is especially striking where the percentage of the nonwhite labor force so engaged may shrink from 11 per cent in 1967 to less than 10 per cent by 1975 -- and to an even smaller proportion by 1980.

Associated with -- and partly responsible for -- these improvements in the occupational distribution of the nonwhite population is the expectation of substantial further progress in their educational achievement. If the trend of the increase in the median years of schooling for both whites and nonwhites recorded during the period 1952 to 1967 continues during the decade of the 1970's, the gap between the two will have been narrowed considerably. On this assumption, by 1980, nonwhite women on the average may have completed about 12.1 years of schooling compared with 12.6 years for white women. This would mean that the educational differential would have shrunk from 0.9 years in 1967 to only 0.5 years in favor of white women. Among nonwhite men, the median years of schooling may have risen to 11.4 years by 1980, compared with 12.8 years for white men, further narrowing the gap to about 1.4 years compared with a gap of 1.9 years in 1967. Moreover, substantial improvement can also be expected in the quality of education received by Negroes over the next decade.

College Education and the Economic Progress of the Black Community

Sadly, however, as I observed at the outset, just at the time when the outlook for greater participation by Negroes in the national economy is improving considerably, a number of digressions are appearing which may lead astray some of our most promising young people.

We can encounter on an increasing number of college campuses a myopic view which holds that black students really do not need to concern themselves with a good part of the curriculum offered by a typical undergraduate college. Instead, it is being argued by many students and faculty members that courses and programs should be recast to concentrate on subjects such as urban problems, the eradication of racism, the enhancement of the blackman's cultural image, and the widening of knowledge of his heritage among members of a predominantly white society. Parallel to -- and reinforcing -- this view is a spreading tendency among many black students to isolate themselves into separate enclaves and to minimize contact with whites. In my personal judgment, these developments are not only short-sighted; they are inimical both to Negro students themselves and to the Negro community at large.

In expressing this criticism, I am not unaware of the need for a thorough reform of much of the curriculum offered by even our best institutions. Through serving on several college governing boards and advisory committees, I see a good deal of campus life.* I have spent a fair proportion of my professional life in college teaching;** and -- through lectures and seminars -- I still participate frequently in the

*My present service includes: Overseer, Harvard University (Massachusetts); Trustee, Tuskegee Institute (Alabama); Carlton College (Minnesota); and Howard University (Washington, D.C.); Member, Advisory Committee, Graduate School of Business, Atlanta University (Georgia).

**I have taught at Harvard, Michigan State, and the University of Pennsylvania.

intellectual environment of the campus. Through numerous discussions with students, faculty members, and college administrators, I am convinced that in most institutions numerous courses and programs are seriously out-of-date. But I am also convinced that in most colleges and universities -- undoubtedly spurred to a considerable degree by persistent pressure for change on the part of students and junior faculty members -- the process of modernization is underway, and it can be expected to accelerate.

What concerns me most are the consequences which some of the campus innovations imply for black students and for the Negro community as a whole. In particular, I am greatly disturbed by the proliferation of programs variously described as "black studies" or "Afro-American studies" and by the growing tendency of numerous Negro students to concentrate in such areas or to substitute such courses for more traditional subjects in undergraduate programs (especially in the social sciences and humanities). So far only a few colleges apparently have established degree programs in these fields, but a sizable number of institutions do accept them as appropriate for minors or secondary concentration.

In my personal judgment, Negro students should be extremely cautious about devoting their college careers to a concentration on "black studies" or "Afro-American studies." I can well understand the bitterness and frustration they may feel about the lack of awareness of the major contributions which black people have made not only to American society but in the world at large. I can also appreciate their eagerness to

equip themselves to work effectively in the improvement of the urban environment in which most of them will live once they leave college. Nevertheless, they should have no illusions about the extent to which they are likely to acquire in "black studies" programs the mental discipline, technical skills, and rigorous training in problem-solving that they will so desperately need in their future careers.

Rather black students -- along with all other students -- must accept the fact that there is no real alternative to thorough grounding in the technical underpinnings of the subject they may choose as a major. And whatever may be their field of concentration, they really must learn to read and to write and to speak effectively -- and they just have to achieve some degree of understanding in mathematics and the other so-called hard sciences. In addition, they certainly will need some acquaintance with the social sciences -- especially with the subject matter of economics, sociology and political science.

Unfortunately, one encounters far too few faculty members on college campuses these days who are willing to face black students and insist that they take a meaningful and realistic view of the requirements of a college education. Instead, more and more of the key faculty members in many institutions -- and often they are among the most sensitive and responsive -- seem to be accepting (in some cases completely and in others with only slight modifications) whatever "demands" for program and other changes black students may propose. Rarely does one see faculty members

(in whose hands a college curriculum must rest) coming forth to tell black students that some of their proposals and views are simply nonsense -- as some of them certainly are! One gets the distinct impression that, on the predominantly white college campus, faculty and administrators are showing considerable panic in their relations with black students. In the typical case, there are few -- if any -- Negroes on the campus with college or professional training who can offer advice and counsel, and thus provide a somewhat more considered perspective on the environment of the American Negro today and the outlook for the years ahead.

Thus, many college faculties, perhaps unconsciously, are accepting the untested views of numerous black students (only occasionally tempered by the benefit of an off-campus review) about the the character and content of a college education that has meaning for American Negroes. In the process, they may be helping to create a series of sheltered workshops in which black students languish during a considerable part of their college careers and then leave the campus ill-equipped to perform in a world which is placing an increasingly heavy premium on technical skills and a vigorous intellect. Thus, on the mistaken assumption that they are being relevant and responsive, many of our college faculties are creating facilities which may cripple young people -- rather than strengthen their ability to compete in an economy of expanding opportunities.

In my opinion, if they really want to be helpful to many young people who truly need their assistance and guidance, colleges should devote

themselves to attracting more students from low income areas -- both urban and rural -- a step which will clearly require a considerable expansion in their scholarships and other forms of financial assistance. And once they are on campus, they should be provided with special counseling and other remedial assistance to enable them to overcome the handicaps imposed by inferior high schools and to master even the toughest parts of the college curriculum. Moreover, under no circumstance should the colleges provide them with college-supported segregated housing either on or off campus -- as unfortunately some institutions are currently doing. After all, the opportunity to broaden one's own horizon is one of the chief benefits of a college experience.

I have concentrated in this part of these remarks on the problems arising on the predominantly white campuses -- because there the issues are most acute. But they also exist on predominantly black campuses as well. We hear from time-to-time about the resentment and rejection many black students on such campuses have shown toward the few white students who have enrolled in recent years. I find such practices especially dismaying; one would have thought that people who have suffered themselves from the corrosive effects of racial discrimination and segregation would be the last to inflict such pain on others.

Concluding Remarks

In my judgment, the foregoing analysis strongly suggests that, if the rate of improvement registered during the last decade continues,

the Negro in the 1970's will strengthen substantially his relative position in the American economy. His employment situation will be much stronger, and his real income will be considerably higher. The opportunities to share as a full participant in an expanding economy also will have widened noticeably.

On the other hand, these possible gains are by no means assured. Thus, a far greater effort -- on the part of Negroes as well as on the part of government and the private sector generally -- will be required if the promises are to be fulfilled. For Negroes, and especially for Negro youth, this greater effort must be concentrated on the improvement of technical competence, the acquisition of marketable skills and the enhancement of their ability to compete in an economy of expanding opportunity.