The State of BLACK
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INTRODUCTION

Lately I have been looking much more to the future than to the past but if there is a thing that has been most successful in coaxing me to consider things previous, it is the booklet you now hold. For ten weeks it's been on my mind or in my hands. Now it is done.

Although this is the space usually reserved for the editor to preface the selections with a number of carefully chosen words, to gloss the approaching essays with valuable insights and, finally, to prepare the reader for a valuable experience, I will do none of these things.

What follows is the state of black Rice. Read it with care.

This is for Cathi, her four years of kindness.

Alexander X. Byrd
August 10, 1990
Introduction

The state of the art in...
My point is simply that blacks are equal and should be treated and recognized as being equal in the working force of Rice University. We can do more than just physical labor.

Willie Gordon

Office of Admissions

I belong in America and this is supposed to be a free country, yet there are times I question that. Blacks are still treated as though they have to prove themselves. If a black applicant is interviewed for a job, then that person has to be twice as good as a white applicant on paper and three times as good when being interviewed in person.

In my fourteen years plus at Rice, I've experienced nasty attitudes from people visiting the admission office when they come in and see a black sitting at the front desk. Even now, there are more blacks in our office (support staff) than whites but each and every time a white person enters the office looking for advice or directions to other offices on campus, the white person that sits in the middle of the room is always asked the questions except when needing to know where the restroom is --then of course, the black staff members are asked.

Some of the Rice faculty committee members come into the office to read folders and don't even bother to open their mouth with a simple hello. It's always, "Where are the folders the committee members are to read?" The principle is what counts--the people that work with the manual labor of each applicant should not be ignored, taken for granted that they know nothing about an applicant or stepped on and over. Perhaps it is because the ladies that work with the folders are all black with the exception of one person.

My point is simply that blacks are equal and should be treated and recognized as being equal in the working force of Rice University. We can do more than just physical labor. We can make as much money as the next person. We can think as well as the next person. We can function as well as the next person. The color of the skin should not be a determining factor as to how one is treated. God created all men equal and in the image of Him. (We all must wonder what God looks like since we are all created in His likeness).
Most student perspectives revolve around the macroculture (The macroculture is the predominate culture that has developed primarily out of Anglo and Western European traditions and has largely determined the formal institutions, official language, social values and other aspects of life in the society.) Therefore, it is imperative that the university curriculum include courses that relate to black culture.

M. Shankle  
Office of the Registrar
PHILLIP HALL
Class of 1988

Being removed from the daily activities of the Rice campus for about a
year and a half now, I am reluctant to address the status of African-
American students at Rice. I'll try to focus on the problems I feel most
pressing to our people.

My personal experiences at Rice were, to say the least, interesting. As
my good friends can attest, though I graduated Thank You Laude, I
made up for my academic failures with a strong commitment to black
interests. Some might argue that studying is of the utmost priority.
Understanding your schoolwork is important but I find it hard to believe
that it is impossible to find time for activities that are geared towards
black students. Let me point out an example.

Last month I brought The Houston Post Office Chorale to my alma
mater for a concert. Unfortunately, there were more than enough seats
for everyone. I believe that there were about eight BSU students in the
audience. It was a pathetic showing. It bothers me when black students
complain about about the lack of activities and then make such a poor
effort to attend. It annoys me that our Minority Affairs Office Director
has to fight tooth and nail for funding from the administration, only to
have the same officials witness a "sitting-room" only crowd. Apathy
does something to the credibility of our protest for funding, courses in
black history, professors and the like.

I hope that the state of Black Rice is changing. Outside of the hedges,
we are not giving enough of ourselves to the community and the work
we're doing on campus could use improvement. Don't forsake your
education--enhance it. Some of the best lessons you'll learn are from
life--not chem.lab. Black Rice, show some interest in your own!
I am concerned with the manner in which Fight Night was handled for this spring semester. My only account was from the *Thresher* article which reported that the students organizing the event were given the "run around" by the administration. I understand the legal and medical concerns and boxing is not something I really enjoy, however, as one student mentioned, this is another tie to the black community that has been severed.

M. Shankle
Office of the Registrar
There appears to be some prejudice and misinformation in our high school counseling offices. There are a number of counselors who steer qualified students away from outstanding universities like Rice. I encountered one. As my counselor would have it, since I was a black female with blue-collar parents, I would not be accepted to Rice. And if I were, I would not be able to succeed here. "My Gosh, white Dr.XYZ's son did not get in, so how can you?" (Guess what? I not only got accepted to Rice, but graduated in four years with degrees in Managerial Studies and Economics.)

Because of my [high school] experience,[once I enrolled] I became involved with the Student Admissions Committee. I discovered that many others had encountered the same "scare tactics" I had. I am glad that I was there for some people who were unnecessarily discouraged. I wonder how many others there were?

After becoming involved with the Committee, I noticed a great variance in attitudes and approaches to admissions. To my dismay, there were a couple of people who did not understand the personal side of admissions. They went by the book. If you didn't make a 1350 on your SAT, then you can't be an engineer. If you are a first generation college student who does not score well on the English section of the SAT, you should not be allowed to attend Rice. It didn't matter if your parents did not speak English, thus limiting your exposure. It did not matter if you scored a 700 on your Math SAT.

This is a true account. It did not appear to one professor or admissions committee member that if this young man had been exposed to English, his English would improve. His math scores showed me that he was intelligent.
and could meet challenges successfully.

I realize that all those on the Admissions Committee have a goal of making Rice a great institution with an outstanding academic record, but how about the personal, individual attention for which we pride ourselves? As I understand it, the reason we require a prospective student to interview is so we can find out more about a person than just his SAT scores and high school grades. Is this not true? I believe that the members of the Admissions Committee should be carefully selected. Because of its importance, the Admissions Committee should only contain those persons that have an understanding of and an interest in all students and that will actively support the direction in which this university must go.

No, I do not want unqualified students of any color at Rice; however, some flexibility is a must.

The university's flexibility and direction were evidenced in 1988 with the formation of the Office of Minority Affairs. The office has a duty to assist minority students in applying, financing, coping and graduating. This is a large task and it is just one step in the right direction. We all know that William Marsh Rice University was formed to provide free education to Caucasian students. It is ironic that tuition was never charged until integration was mandated.

Today, we are still fighting many prejudices. And I believe that the Office of Minority Affairs is a good start—not an end.

One concern I have with the Office of Minority Affairs is its staffing. This is not to say that Catherine Clack is not doing a good job but the office warrants more attention and personnel. Another integral ingredient besides staffing is hierarchical support [and solid monetary support]. It is not enough merely to establish the Office of Minority Affairs. Financial support is crucial. The university has money for ice cream socials and parties. It should have money set aside for this more important function. No, money "earmarked" for the athletic departments is not the same as money for minority students.
My request is for the financiers to show their support for this office by providing it with a larger budget. Alumni, donate money to the university. Specify it for the Office of Minority Affairs. Donate your time, as well, to this office. Participate in its functions. Volunteer your time to the Admissions Office. Donate money to the Office of Minority Affairs. We must have our opinions heard and our dedication to a worthy cause seen. Much improvement is needed. It is our responsibility to do as much as humanly possible to diversify Rice.
The retention of minority students in school is related to the presence of minority faculty. It seems that the majority of the mentors for black students are other blacks. If black faculty are needed on the Rice campus so that black students may have a higher probability of obtaining on-campus mentoring, then the hiring of black faculty members should be high priority.

It seems that the increase of black faculty does not happen fast enough because it is felt that black faculty have to be extraordinary to make a real and positive contribution. The university could recruit black faculty members whose talents are within the full range of the talents of existing faculty. The presence of Black faculty and administrators is important also for non-black students. These students need to know that black adults are capable, contributing professionals in the university setting. Their presence would be helpful in eradicating stereotypes held by non-black students and adults.

Black faculty members usually take a personal interest in the student. This is not to say that current rice professors do not. In fact, I see black professors everyday who do not really care about helping the black student. That is why we must hire those who are truly interested in contributing to the Rice community. They can guide the black student in progressive, productive ways, while pointing out pitfalls to be avoided -- thereby providing valuable insights and knowledge to proteges. Sometimes a black perspective is needed. Black professors could very well have experienced the same problems as the young black freshman. Black role models are needed and I am concerned with keeping black professors, not for just one or two years, but for several years.

Rice could develop programs to attract more black students. Rice does have a minority Rice-Baylor Pre-med Program. We could also use such a program in the humanities, through which more blacks would become aware of and gain an interest in attending Rice. In recruiting black students, Rice must use a multifaceted approach that involves academic, financial, and social areas. There is also a need to develop a formal and comprehensive institutionalized strategy for improving the recruitment and retention of black faculty and students. There should be a more organized and concerted effort. A committee could assist academic departments and services in recruiting, assist student affairs in providing personnel support to minority students, and the university in providing cultural heritage support activities. This cannot be left solely to the admissions office. Deans, department heads, and faculty have much influence over the control and destiny of their academic units. This committee could assist the university in developing social opportunities and programs for students who differ from the dominant enrollment of the institution. Freshmen could be monitored to learn about their early experiences on campus. The earlier the university can identify potential dropouts, the better its chance of retaining them. This type of committee would constitute at least one part of an appropriate educational atmosphere whereby a committed university administration would play a major role in helping disadvantaged students become college persisters.

M. Shankle
Office of the Registrar
Here at Rice University, as we "celebrate" another Black History month, with a theme centered on Carter G. Woodson and his contributions to the study of African American History, we would do well to ponder over the extent to which an awareness of the distinctly unique contributions of African-Americans are sufficiently appreciated by members of the Rice community not just during Black History month, but on a daily basis. What are the numbers of African-American students at Rice? What percentage of African-American students are athletes? How many African-Americans are in the tenure-eligible ranks of the faculty? Where are the African-American administrators? How does the percentage of African-Americans among the support staff compare with their percentage in the professional staff category? I think that the answers to these questions will indicate that the racial composition of the campus community is not as diverse as it ought to be and could be. Additionally, this directly affects the manner in which Rice is perceived by the greater Houston community and on a state and national level.

I am not suggesting that there is a magical number which we can use as indicative of a respectable level of diversity at Rice. Numbers without meaningful integration is not the answer. How would we know when we have made significant progress in creating a campus environment that values diversity? When it is not assumed that the African-American student crossing the campus is an athlete and when it is not further inferred that the individual does not have a meaningful academic contribution to make; when African-Americans participate in key administrative decision-making; when they are as a matter of course appointed to serve on critical university committees.
How then do we get from mere desegregation to full integration of African-Americans at Rice?

1) This must be a policy and priority at the highest administrative level.

2) There needs to be an examination of what has been done since 1963 to promote desegregation and integration at Rice, and an evaluation of the results of these efforts. A useful mechanism for conducting this self-analysis might be the appointment of a broad-based presidential commission whose task it will be to conduct this study and make recommendations for action.

3) A blueprint for action must be developed and resources allocated for its implementation.

4) Those in decision-making positions with respect to implementing the blueprint for improving the status of African-Americans at Rice must be held accountable for their actions or lack thereof.

5) Active, aggressive, and creative recruitment strategies must be implemented for African-American faculty, staff, and student recruitment. For example, increasing use could be made of the African-American alumni/ alumnae in the various cities and states as contact persons in the recruitment of African-American students.

6) Appointment of African-Americans to important faculty, staff, and student governance committees on campus.

7) Increase the number of curriculum offerings that incorporate, recognize and value the contributions of African-Americans. Consideration should be given to the creation of an interdisciplinary African-American Studies Program to serve as an umbrella for these offerings.

8) Faculty and staff training relative to multicultural issues and sensitivity to racial differences.

I do not profess to have all the answers to this vexing problem. There already exist on campus and in the community individuals who could provide valuable advice and direction to the blueprint for action to improve the status of African-Americans at Rice. If the university is to maintain its leadership role in academia into the next century and beyond, it must continue to keep pace with change. Above all, a redefinition toward enhancing the number of African-Americans in every facet of university activity at Rice would ultimately ensure that we all benefit from the multi-faceted nature of the community which would emerge. Diversity is an essential element of academic excellence.
That the university has invited black speakers for the President's Lecture Series shows a sensitivity among university administrators. A black minister recently gave the invocation for commencement. These useful beginnings need to be enhanced further.

If Rice does not make Martin Luther King's birthday a university holiday, then those who wish to recognize it should be able to recognize it without being penalized. It is because of King's work that blacks are able to be a part of Rice university today.

M. Shankle
Office of the Registrar
I must say that most of my experiences as a Black S.E. at Rice have not been different from those of my non-black counterparts. I, like many others, came here from the top of my high school class, and found that I had to work much harder here to do half as well as I did before. I’ve spent many hours doing homework, working in labs, and being stressed out over upcoming tests. Basically I’ve had the same self-esteem lowering experience as many other students here. However, not all of my experiences have been typical of all Rice S.E.’s.

One problem I’ve faced is that some people tend to make judgments on the basis of color. For instance, some people assume that because I am black, I must have been let in under the minimum requirements and that I am capable of, at best, just getting by and incapable of much else. Also, I have been stopped and asked to show my I.D. by the campus police who assume I don’t belong here. Many times these assumptions aren’t made out of prejudice but simply out of a lack of awareness. Many [white] students come here from schools where they have never had the opportunity to get to know a black person personally. Thus it is often difficult for them to relate to the problems blacks face at Rice.

Also, I feel that a sort of cultural alienation of blacks exists on this campus. Several of the planned activities don’t appeal to most of the blacks here. For instance, most of music played at parties is performed by non-Black artists. None of the campus productions are by black playwrights and no black literature courses are offered.

In such an environment, there are basically three ways in which blacks try to cope. One, they try to fit in by conforming to the majority. Two, they seek entertainment off campus. Three, they decide to withdraw completely from campus life and just “stick it out” for four years.

The second semester of my freshman year, I decided that it was a lost cause for me to try to have fun on this campus. Also, I lacked the transportation and time to do many things off campus. Therefore, I tried to bury myself in my work (which isn’t hard to do at Rice).
After the semester ended, I had time to reflect during the summer. I decided that the way I had chosen [to cope] was no way to spend my college years. At that point I knew I had to make a decision. Was I going to leave Rice altogether or was I going to try to make the most of "The Rice Experience?" Obviously, I chose to stay. However, I was then faced with another problem: How do you make the most of "The Rice Experience?" At that point I decided that the most I could do to make my stay bearable was to try to build friendships. Although good friendships do make life more bearable, isn't there more to college life than just tolerability?

I answered with a resounding "Yes!" There is more to college life than just tolerability. Upon this realization I asked several other questions such as:

- What does the admissions office need to do?
- What does the S.A. need to do?
- What does the RPC need to do?
- What do the college masters need to do and what do the college cabinets need to do? I couldn't come up with one solid answer for any of these questions.

It wasn't until a bit later that I realized that if there were to be any improvement in the state of blacks at Rice, it had to start with the Black students.

First of all, we need to communicate honestly with each other about the things with which we are unhappy. After deciding on a course of action to alleviate these problems, we need to make the rest of the campus aware of our grievances. After we have done this, only then can we expect to bring about change. In addition to all these things, if we are unhappy with the S.A, we should run for an S.A. office and try to change it from the inside. If we don't like the way our college cabinets are run, we should run for cabinet office and do likewise. Basically, the point I'm trying to get across is that blacks are going to have to get involved in Rice before we can change it. In other words, we have to abolish the "get mine and get on" syndrome.
It is important that the black students acquire a sense of belonging, fitting in, and feeling a part of the university. The college system at Rice helps in the process. It also facilitates in the social relations with non-black students. Based on personal experience, I feel the college system is a great way for everyone to get acquainted. There are professors living next door, students of differing backgrounds all around, to name but two areas. I found it easy to interact with non-black students. All one had to do was step out the door, and there were a mass students ready and willing to be friends. In fact, sometimes they would seek you out to get involved in the college activities.

More black community associates in the colleges would enhance an already valuable experience.

M. Shankle

Office of the Registrar
Mark Hicks
Office of Admissions

On Admission:
Rice is the second private, highly selective school for which I have worked. While I do not intend to diminish the importance of increasing the presence of students from minority ethnic/cultural backgrounds, the situation at Rice is slightly better than most colleges. That is not, of course, to say that we can not do better; but, when I hear my colleagues [at other universities] talk about "importing" students from Africa to make up a .01 per cent representation of black students, I don't feel so bad. Recruiting minority students is a complex, emotional, and often misunderstood process. And because the Rice environment is one where only students with proven academic performance are truly admissible, we find ourselves in a rather precarious position. On the one hand, for instance, we are not able simply to go into the inner-cities and openly welcome disadvantaged students to join us. These students simply lack the academic background to survive at Rice --- let alone thrive. Also, the mission of Rice does not lend itself toward admitting students who are severely deficient in their preparation for college-level work. This situation basically leaves us with one other option: recruiting for a competitive environment such as ours. But this predicament also proves difficult as the pool of qualified, minority applicants is very small. For example, in 1985 in the state of Texas, fewer than of 17 per cent of all black students who were planning to attend college took the basic college prep curriculum (e.g. 4-units of English, 3-units of math, 2-units of laboratory science, 2-units of social sciences, and 2-units of the same foreign language). So, from this pool, we must take the best — those who have distinguished themselves academically and personally. Remember also that 3,000 other colleges and universities seek these same students. While this situation can be called bleak at best, it is not insurmountable. Rice must work harder to convince "admissible" students that we can be a suitable, even positive place for them to learn and have a pleasant college experience. We must also, and with the same vigor, work with middle schools as well as high school freshman and sophomores to advise them on how to prepare for college as well as excite them about the opportunities that a college experience provides. The senior year is too late to begin preparing for the rigors of a highly selective, competitive environment. Rice has made tremendous gains (especially since the 1960's), but we can always do better.
On Residential Life:

Assessing residential life for me is much more difficult, mainly because I find it hard to locate that "fine line" that separates the personal experience of a black student from the collective experience of a black students. All in all, the character of the Rice student body (i.e. a general tendency to be independent and self-supportive) allows most students (black included) to fare well. We live, nonetheless, in a less than perfect world and sometimes people are slow to understand subtle personal and collective differences.

From my perspective, the frustrations of blacks at Rice are the same as blacks in the "real world." Historically, our roles have been clearly defined as to how we "fit" into society --- our purpose, mission, goals. We often forget that our generation is the first (at least in legal terms) to expect equal access and the ability to conquer that "American dream." My parents, for example, had to work against great odds to achieve success and personal equality. Thank goodness, times have changed. Today, the issues are not access-related; they revolve around intellectual and personal equality. We want to be accepted for who and what we are, but at the same time we are a people who are proud of our common heritage. Where does the personal and collective persona begin and end? Does a balance exist? I think few of us truly have a grip of where we fit; therefore, I am not surprised that others tend not to understand us.

Heart-felt discussion and dialogue is needed. Realizing our personal and collective responsibility to those who will come after us is crucial. Only then will we not be required to "recruit" minority students because minority youth will naturally realize their potential and self-worth and will automatically be represented in the application pool. Only then will Black Heritage months be celebrations of culture and diversity instead of convincing others of our right to exist.
Am I happy with the state of Black Rice? No, I am not.

Selecting a college is one of the most important decisions that a person has to make in her life. The four or five years spent in college are very formative ones and have been referred to as "the best years of your life." The majority of students here at Rice seem to be having the time of their lives. They appear to be happy with their college selection, however, many minorities do not seem to share this same enthusiasm. Why is this? One of Rice's slogans is: "the Rice Choice," implying that Rice is the right choice. Is Rice the right choice for black students? I cannot speak for the entire black community at Rice, but I can express my view of the state of Black Rice from a freshman's perspective.

Rice is behind the times and we have a lot of catching up to do. We need to get rid of this conservative attitude and educate the greater student body about prejudice and stereotypes. We must do something to counter the stereotypical images that surround us. It burns me up to go through the lunch line and see all black kitchen workers and then go to class and be taught by white professors, primarily white males. Recently, I went into the campus bookstore and saw a basketball T-shirt with a black hand on the basketball. Is this the "black student" at Rice? What is a white, suburban teenager supposed to think when he/she comes to Rice? Should I be mad when they ask me what sport I play? This does bother me somewhat, but what should I expect them to think? They see few or no blacks in administrative positions or teaching positions here at Rice. Black students are not very noticeable in Rice literature and yet we have an athletic T-shirt with a black hand on it. The stereotypical image that Rice portrays is obvious and and prevalent.

After I accepted my admission to Rice I learned that I had been misled somewhat. It was not until I arrived that I found the Office of Minority Affairs was only one year old. To me, that was very sad and pathetic. It hurt me even more to find out that there was such a big controversy over whether to have an Office of Minority Affairs. I had no idea that the people at Rice were so ignorant or unconcerned about the fact that minorities do have special needs. It really hurt me when I heard some of the arguments against having an OMA. One person said that if blacks felt uncomfortable here then they should just leave.

I believe that an Office of Minority Affairs is essential at a predominantly white university such as Rice. Other schools seem to understand its importance. I received numerous materials from the other schools by which I was accepted. They sent me...
newsletters and viewbooks specifically designed to show black life on campus. I also received letters and phone calls from black upperclassmen. Georgetown even invited me to a Minority Weekend, like our Owl Day but specifically for minority students. It showed me that they were truly interested in minority students.

Rice does not seem to show very much interest in recruiting minority students. I know that there are many of bright, black students all around the country, so Rice cannot say that the reason there are not more blacks here is because of the lack of availability of intelligent black students. We can say that is because of the lack of black applicants. Why is this? What can we do to change it? We must do more minority recruitment and show a sincere interest in minority students once they are on campus. We need to change our image of being a conservative, racist school. We seem to like to compare ourselves with Harvard and Yale, but we do not measure up to these schools in the area of minority affairs and race relations. If we want to keep up with the Yales and Harvards, it is going to take more than raising tuition, having the "teacher of the year", and building new facilities. If Rice truly wants to be respected, then we need to become more sensitive to the needs and concerns of minorities.

Some people seem to have the attitude that blacks, in general, are not smart enough to attend Rice, therefore why try to recruit them. Yes, the transition from a predominantly black high school to Rice University is tough. Even though I graduated at the top of my class from the best school in Kansas City, Missouri public school system, I still had a difficult time adjusting to my first semester at Rice. It was not that I did not have the ability to compete with the other students. I just did not have the same background and preparation. Some students were ahead of me because they had access to more resources and were exposed to more advanced courses. Ability is not the issue. Preparation is. Rice should offer a program to try to bring minority students closer to the level that the majority students are on. This could probably help improve the black retention rate.

Am I happy with the state of Black Rice? No, I am not. However, I am glad that I am here to make some noise and fight for change and improvement. After I graduate, I want to be proud to say that I attended Rice University, and I want Rice to be proud that I am a graduate.
As a Visiting Fellow in African (Cultural) Studies, the issue that is of immediate concern to me, and about which, if I am allowed, I can express an opinion, is the extent to which African and black material is available for academic study and research at Rice.

From my limited experience, so far 6 months, the available resources constitute a solid foundation on which much can be built. Let me confess that until I saw a flyer for a Visiting Fellowship in African (Cultural) Studies at Rice, I was absolutely ignorant about the existence of Rice University. And I am not alone in this; even those of us who trained in the U.S. in other areas of Humanities and Social Sciences know Rice only by name and reputation for academic excellence, or "toughness".

In my home university, [we] are more familiar with overseas universities which run African Studies programs, and with which we maintain links. Indeed, the earlier generation, and some of the present generation of Africanists, received their training in such universities. But the existence of an African Studies, African/Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, or Ethnic Studies Institute, though desirable, is not a sine qua non for the study of African/Black or any other cultural material, such an institute can be a diving board for the integration of the material into the existing academic programs.

The function [of a African or African-American Studies program] can also be performed by a Center for Cultural Studies with the added advantage that material from other cultures can be accommodated, thus allowing for interdisciplinary and intercultural interaction.

For the past five months, the Center for Cultural Studies of Rice University, to which I am attached, has hosted seminars, lectures and talks covering Asia, Latin America, Europe, America, as well as Africa. This semester, there have been two presentations on Africa. Another one is scheduled for early March in the form of a lecture to be followed by discussion on two...
Visiting Professor
Dr. Ojo

different days. An African Philosophy seminar is scheduled for the spring. So there is plenty of discussion on African Cultural Studies at the Faculty level; but one hopes that the scope can be broadened to include Africa in the diaspora. This can be achieved in the short term by selecting Visiting Fellows knowledgeable in African and African-American Studies, and in the long term by appointing them as faculty in the appropriate disciplines.

At the student level, I am particularly impressed with the African and Black material in the program in History, and research using African material being undertaken by doctoral students in Anthropology under the able supervision of Africanist faculty. I have had the unique opportunity of interacting with students and faculty in the Art and Art History Department, which has the most comprehensive collection of teaching slides on African art. This is backed up by an up-to-date collection of specialist African art journals and the essential books in the field. This much can be said for other areas of African Studies from the little I have been able to find out in the Fondren Library. There is also a priceless collection of African art objects in the department. As to the other subject areas, I have met a faculty member who teaches contemporary African literature in his course and interacted with a student who was making use of material on African oral literature for a short term paper. I did not know that he was the President of the Black Students' Union until he mounted the podium during the current events marking Black History Month!

Like has been done in the departments of History and Anthropology, one will like to see African and Black material introduced and integrated into the academic programs of more departments in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Those that come to mind are English Literature—an area where there is an African Nobel Laureate—Religion, Philosophy, Music (Ethnomusicology) and Art and Art History which I learned used to offer African art as part of the course on non-Western art and where there is currently an Afro-American faculty.

While there may be something to be said for Centers for African Studies, Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, or even Ethnic Studies in order to accommodate other ethnic minorities, the proposition is not as attractive as a Center for Cultural Studies which can bring together researchers and materials from many cultures. Such a center thus becomes a forum in which scholars from several disciplines and specialists in the study of and research on various world cultures can interact.
At undergraduate and graduate levels, African/Black material (and material from other non-Western cultures) can be integrated into the academic programs so that African/Black students can benefit from dealing with their own culture while others gain insights into black/African cultures. In this way, we get to know more about ourselves, others know more about us, and we also have the opportunity of knowing more about others.
Dear Alex,

I accept your invitation to participate in the forum, "The State of Black Rice." The following is a list of my concerns:

1. Unification of black students (athletic & non-athletic students working together toward a common goal).

2. Increased enrollment of black students from the Houston area (Intensify recruiting efforts).

3. Need more blacks in management/professional staff positions (Hire or promote qualified persons regardless of color).

4. Provide air conditioning for kitchens (Convince Food and Housing to submit Facility Budget Requests for HVAC upgrade).

5. Equitable work week for the custodial staff working for Housing (Currently working forty hours spread out over six days. Change to standard forty hour, five day work week).

Sincerely,

Russell Price
Maintenance Manager
My main concern about the state of black Rice is not only the scarcity of blacks at this institution but also that very few blacks wish to attend a university with such high academic standards such as Rice. Blacks who are in high school may overlook Rice as a possible choice of universities because of the small number of blacks that presently attend. I cannot comment on the university's policies on enrolling or recruiting blacks because I do not know enough on the subject.

I feel that the and other Harvard, Yale and example relate problems that our country today. States blacks are respect and in looked down for this disrespect not occupy the positions in the lawyers, big and the leaders of predominantly white. We need to start increasing the number of blacks in these occupations by great proportions so that we can begin to control our own destiny instead of having others control it for us.

One solution to this problem is for blacks to get extremely serious about education and attending universities of higher education. Young blacks need to be made aware of the importance of getting the best education they possibly can and doing something positive with their knowledge. They need to realize the great demand for more doctors, lawyers, teachers and politicians to run the country. They need to appreciate not only how far blacks have come in the last century--through slavery, discrimination and the struggle for civil rights-- but also how far we still
have to go. They must be instilled with black pride along with hope and concern for our future. They must understand how blacks are so very far behind whites and that it is up to us to catch them.
1. Rice continues to reiterate its commitment to a multi-cultural presence on campus, and this is indeed welcome. There are challenges related to attracting more minority faculty to this campus, not least being the image of Rice as a closed society. The desire on the part of Rice for high visibility nationally should be accompanied by the effort to advertise our already quite diverse character.

[Action: Image Re-writing Administration].

2. Secondly, there are challenges related to retaining minority faculty already here. Whereas this is an unpredictable quantity, Rice must be alert to the fact that it has real competitors nationwide looking for those few that reside here. A regular reappraisal of their needs individually as well as departmentally and bureaucratically might be deemed desirable.

[Action: Administration].

3. Rice has in place new institutions actively involved, this past year at least, in searches for new faculty: French Studies, Women's Studies, Cultural Studies to name three. Experience shows that there is interest in Rice from minorities. But the fellowships are limited. I suggest that Rice match the two positions of Rockefeller Fellows at the Center for Cultural Studies with another three fellowships specifically earmarked for Minorities.

[Action: Dean, Humanities].

4. There are issues relating to nurture. The Humanities should identify our minority graduates who excel, and position them into a Staff Training Programme. Rice should pay for their
Professor

ODHIAMBO

graduate studies elsewhere, and hire them on successful completion of their PhDs. I understand this already happens in the sciences.

[Action: Dean, Humanities].

5. Rice is situated in a city of close to 3/4 million minority peoples, who have a significant intellectual and cultural performance presence. Rice has tremendous facilities for conference - all the way to the 1990 Summit! There should be a devotion to attracting the daughters and sons of Houston who have excelled nationwide (sculptors, musicians, historians, poets) to exhibit, sing, talk, and make Rice their home, a la President Bush.

[Action: Administration].

6. To the mutual advantage of the university and the city, Rice is entitled to its share of the world’s celebrations of glory. It should be the practice of Rice to invite minority men of science, arts and letters who have achieved world renown to visit the university and serve as role models for achievements beyond colour. A start can be made by focussing on the Noble Prize winners this last decade. Abdus Salaam, Marquez, Mahfoudh and Soyinka come to mind as available citizens who would substantially boost the statue of minority intellect.

[Action: President Rupp].

7. Rice has a responsibility, a moral one at that, to help those struggling into world citizenship to do so on a foundation like the sound education available at Rice. Right now the focus is on South Africa as it approaches its rendezvous with history. By offering three undergraduate and two graduate fellowships yearly to South African blacks Rice can help them prepare to serve their country better by the year 2000 and beyond.
Notes

1. Ms. McKnight is referring to the Office's dependence on soft money--corporate and foundation gifts--and its relative dearth of enduring university support. Of the Office's budget, only the director's salary, office space and administrative support are provided by the university. All program funds are secured from outside sources and are subject to significant flux.

2. In addition to working at Rice, Ms. Shankle is also pursuing a graduate degree in political science at a local university that boasts a substantial black population.

3. The year Rice first admitted blacks.

4. Kirby John Caldwell of Windsor Village Methodist Church

5. At the end of the 1990 school year, the English department hired Dr. Lucille Fultz of Emory University. In the fall of 1990, she will teach the Afro-American literature course.

6. a necessary condition

7. Dr. Odhiambo and Alex Byrd respectively

8. Dr. Odhiambo is referring to the Office of Minority Affair's Teacher/Scholar proposal. At present the proposal is inactive.

* Many thanks the students, staff and faculty who submitted essays for this collection and to Dr. Cox who was kind enough to comment on the draft. Of course, I am responsible for any problems in the text that still remain.
To the mutual advantage of the university and the city, Rice is 2,000 strong. A start can be made by focussing on the Nobel Prize winners this year. Atlantic councils, universities, and Smithsonian should be invited to visit the university and serve as role models. The university should offer residencies to senior scholars and arts and letters who have achieved world renown to visit the university and serve as role models. University presidents and Nobel Prize winners should be invited to visit the university, and Atlantic councils and Smithsonian should be invited to participate in special programs.

[Action: President Rapp].

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[Action: President Rapp].