developing **african leadership**
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UHURU : Volume 10 : Number 2
On The Front Cover:

The "Fong" guardian figure from Gabon in Central Africa has been utilized from the beginning of the Institute for African American Affairs as a part of the IAAA logo. It is in the "I" as a symbol for the African connection and protection of the Institute which has now evolved into the Department of Pan African Studies.

Cover Photo By Mitchell E Stanford

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In the spirit of protest, activism and leadership we have compiled various articles and photos in an effort to recreate the history of Black United Students. Beginning in 1968, the movement to restructure our education, learn our past and develop our future gained momentum on the campus of Kent State University. It is our hope that the feeling of that time can be recaptured and used to improve relations amongst Black organizations. Let us draw from it the courage and conviction to strive for progress and work toward the betterment of our community.

Read the following pages carefully. Worthy of our pride, our time and our collective effort, Black United Students has a history that is symbolic, yet little-known. Note that moments of progress are marked by our unification as a people with a common cause, an agenda. What is our agenda? Have we become complacent with a department called Pan African Studies? What do we expect of our faculty, fellow students and ourselves?

Such feelings of complacency and apathy are not specific to our campus. It is a plague that is affecting us nationwide. Sure we have more capital and degrees than during any time in the history of this nation. Yet, we are experiencing drug addiction, homelessness, insufficient schooling, abandonment and other ailments.

We have lost ourselves in this melting pot and have identified with a world view that is foreign to our people, poisoning our souls. In any environment, knowledge of self enables one to survive and even flourish. Let us learn from the plight of our people on this campus and in our communities. Most importantly, may we again show respect for ourselves and one another, my sisters and brothers. Look around you, near you, in you to find a role model. Be they a school teacher, police officer, parole officer, girl friend or an ex-con, take heed to those possessing wisdom, compassion and other worthwhile qualities. Emulate positivity and share your goodness unselfishly.

No one is better qualified to determine our futures. To that end, may we rediscover pride in ourselves, our heritage and our history. Our beloved elders in Oscar Ritchie can only educate and remind us about the struggle. They cannot continue to be responsible for engaging in it, carrying us. We are the leaders of the not-so-distant future. It is incumbent upon us to acquire the information necessary to unite the families and communities of our Pan African Nation.

We are fortunate to have on our campus, not just a Black Studies Department, but instead a department founded on the philosophies of Pan Africanism, embracing our extended family. In many ways we fail to show our appreciation for the many treasures found in the halls of Oscar Ritchie. Graced with the blessings of our ancestors, the building is consecrated with the art and emotion of a people moving toward greatness. Let us resurrect their spirits and continue the journey to an existence without oppression. None of which could be possible without the house that BUS built.

While bragging of the majesty found in our palace, we are painfully aware that the stability of our home is at risk. Have we risen to the occasion? Whether it be burned from within or bombed by outsiders, the consequences of such actions would leave us homeless, without a place to rest our bodies, feed our spirit or nurture our souls. Can you imagine life on this campus without that? Now, envision the nation... BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL, BLACK AND PROUD UNITED WITHIN, AND WITH OUT STRONG IN MIND, A SOUND BODY THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT BUS BUILT.

Arie Goodman Editor - in - Chief
The definition of leadership varies from person to person, depending on their own personal experiences. My definition of a leader is a person who positively directs and instructs a follower or followers. The leaders in my life are my Mother Cynthia and my Grandmother Janie. These two women have advised and instructed me positively and spiritually for all of my twenty-two years of existence. They are permanent influences in my decision-making process and career goals. They have taught me morals and values, that I’ve witnessed them utilize within their own lives. A leader influences and motivates change and improvement. And like Mother and Grandmother, they would not tell you anything that would hurt you. Leaders are role-models and should be conscious of their actions.

My opinion is that in the nineties, the existence of positive and non-corrupt leaders is rare. Everyone seems to be out for their own self-promotion and economic gain. People who have made “it” (whatever “it” is), have failed to help their brothers/sisters to prosper, as well. Either that, or they have forgotten where they have come from and that someone had to have helped them along the way. The road to success would be a lot less “bumpy” if leaders would fill “pot holes” with knowledge and advice. I will soon be graduating and have not ignored the fact that Black students before me protested and held sit-ins, in order for me to have the opportunity to attend this college. I hope that my past and present achievements will help future generations in their travel upon the road to education.

Our elder leaders fought against oppression and stood for a cause… unity within the community. Has their fight been forgotten? Who is leading us now?

Tiara Burnett
Assistant Editor
The purpose and function of this organization shall be to unite the Black Students of Kent State University, to deal with the problems of the Black student, to create an awareness of Black students on the campus to further develop a Black identity, and to aid the downtrodden. (17)

The BUS Constitution was the black student community's symbolic commitment to the struggle. It showed that not only had black students become conscious of their position within the university, but that they had also developed a plan to guide their movement for change. BUS' philosophy of racial consciousness became the foundation for its movement; this actualization also allowed the organization to challenge other forces in opposition to both black students and Black America in general.

BUS' leadership immediately began its search for an advisor who would be "accountable to Black students." (18) They soon selected Robert Pitts to serve as their liaison to the university's administration. But, because Pitts was a Spanish professor with no prior experience as an executive, the BUS officials did not support BUS' nomination. The leadership of BUS backed Pitts and refused to select one of the already-on-staff advisors in the Office of Student Affairs. Black students were forced to take action since they felt strongly for Pitts. Little did they know that their next move would set the tone for BUS to become the most important student group in the history of KSU... (19)

In the spring of 1968, the Presidential campaign was at full swing and Hubert Humphrey's next stop was KSU. May 6th was the most anticipated day of the school year as Humphrey, who was the Vice President, addressed the students in person. Humphrey was popular among students since at one time he stood against the Vietnam War. While campaigning, Humphrey shifted his ideological view in support of the War, which led many students to question his leadership credibility. BUS seized the opportunity to display collective action by organizing 100 black students who literally stood in unison and walked out on Humphrey's speech. This was the first ever act of civil disobedience conducted by BUS as it was openly "opposed to the institutional racism" of the university. (19) This "boos" from the audience, BUS marched to Bowman Hall where they had arranged a meeting with Robert Picket, the Dean of Students. During the dialogue, BUS voiced its concerns over Pitts, housing discrimination, recruitment and retention of black students and faculty, plus the need for a building on the black experience. (20) BUS members also relayed that they felt "discriminated" against in general, and that they were intentionally excluded from many other campus events and organizations. (21)

Three weeks later, on May 29th, BUS staged an all-night sit-in on the steps of the university Administration Building. The SDS students peacefully camped out under the watchful eye of Cleveland's Newschannel Eight television program. BUS spokesman Lafayette Tolliver was quoted as saying that the protest was organized "in support of Pitts' installation as an executive, to make a showload as a Spanish teacher and also to receive a partial contract as the coordinator and head of Minority Affairs." (23)

BUS won its first major in a major way: Pitts was appointed to Matson's staff yet remained as a professor - and not only that - the organization's action led to the formation of the Human Relations Center and the Office of Minority Affairs. These institutions, which were both headed by black male administrators, were set up within the university in order to assist black students in all areas of concern. BUS' collective reform movement significantly altered the university by changing the course of its bureaucratic organization. (24)

BUS' success in the spring semester of 1968 set the black student movement in motion at KSU. In a matter of months, the organization literally went from nonexistence to being the most powerful student group on campus. The organization's members had become "linked to the total formation of the human rights movement," (25) and had already taken action against the KSU officials who maintained order within the University. (26) BUS was preparing to take on the institutional forces of the university.

Acting quickly, BUS and the anti-Vietnam War group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) mobilized 300 students, 200 of which were black. SDS lined the walls of the Student Activities Center and BUS members all dressed as Black Panthers held a press conference in the entrance of the Placement Office, where the interviews were being conducted. The organization then stated their demands:

1. That Kent State University deny its facilities to the Oakland Police Department.
2. That the University sign a pledge of good faith agreeing not to infringe or otherwise intimidate, recognize, legitimate campaigns.
3. That Kent State University Police Department disarm. (27)

At this point in the protest, once again Dean Matson became involved in the situation. Using a megaphone he told the protesters that they were "disrupting university process and could be prosecuted for such action." (28) The student organization had challenged the ideology of the university; the institution's bureaucracy had been based on the "cultural beliefs that directly or indirectly, justify social stratification." (29) Thus, the protesting student groups had violated the institutional "right of due process," which promoted the administration's hegemony based on guidelines for social conformity.

Matson then attempted to gather a list of names from the demonstrators. When the students failed to cooperate, KSU police officers began to take pictures of them in hopes of identifying them at a later date. This also failed as the protesters dodged the camera. As a last resort, KSU President Robert I. White called on emergency meeting with Matson. On his way out the door, frustrated with the unsuccessful attempts at evading the protesting students, Matson declared an open-ended threat by stating that their actions were "illegal," and that "if the building [was] not cleared, the following action will be taken." (30)

Not long after Matson left, Donald Thigpen, a former BUS leader who had become the Coordinator of the Office of Minority Affairs, was invited to tell the students of the dangers of a political stand-off. He instructed the black males to link arms in a circle around the black females. He then warned that:

What the administration is trying to do is wait us out, to get us tired, or hungry, or bored. We are not here for. There is a possibility that there will soon be police action. What is important is how we respond. (31)

Thigpen's role in the BUS protest is one that must be examined further. At one time, he had been an active in the student movement. He was also a strong supporter of Black Power Movement - which embraced a philosophy that can counter America's white power structure. It had been understood that as a university administrator, Thigpen was supposed to uphold the norms and procedures of KSU's system of due process. However, because he embraced some of the militant ideals of Black Nationalism, Thigpen chose otherwise. Instead of supporting the ideology of the university, Thigpen sided with Black United Students and the Black Power Movement. This exercise against his double consciousness, the idea that African Americans are trapped between the culture and identity of being an American and a people of African descent, helped the protest stand firm. (32)

During the three hour wait for Matson's return, Robert Pickett, the last Black Vice President of the student body, announced his resignation. Frustrated with the apparent "lack of power" in student government, the crowd rallied behind Pickett when he said: "I have been hampered by the University procedures. The student leader has no role on the campus. If he does have any, it's a pseudo-role." (33) Pickett argued that the university supported institutional racism, "laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in society... the established and customary means by which some groups are kept sub-ordinate." (34) Pickett further explained that his purpose for joining Student Government was to better the black student experience at KSU. He felt that his efforts were rewarded by the administration because he was seeking to empower black students:

Since entering office, I have found myself in a vacuum of powerlessness, unable to fulfill the goals which were pressed upon me in Student Government. Neither I nor the Senators who stand with me feel that our offices have any significant purpose or meaning. Of course we do as much as we can, but in being a part of Student Government, have been playing games with the administration or to the drudgery of the situation - the administration has been playing games with us. (35)

Pickett's speech openly revealed the difficulty of challenging the administrative bureaucracy. The idea of "due process" and "policy and procedure" were tenants that supported the University's infrastructure. Thus, the only way to change the University was to go through the proper
channels, which were usually slow and firmly rooted within the institution.

After occupying the Student Activities Center for over five hours, the students disbanded the protest with the stipulation to return the following day if the Oakland PD was still on campus. They then marched to President White's home and held a short victory celebration only a few feet from his front door.

At ten o'clock the next morning, BUS and SDS held a rally in front of the Student Center. They announced plans to cancel the day's demonstration despite the University's reluctance to fulfill their demands. The administration held its ground in support of the Oakland PD. Hence, due to the obstruction of procedure, KSU officials planned to charge as many students as possible for violating due process. Feeling that they had "made their point", the student leaders called for "total and complete amnesty" for their sit-in the day before. (36) Carl Byers, a spokesman for BUS, delivered the ultimate racial caste consciousness statement forever clarifying the purpose of BUS: "If they dismiss one black student, they will have to dismiss every black student here. This is the black liberation front!" (37)

At the Sunday evening BUS meeting, students moved to organize a campus walkout for the very next day if the university attempted to individually prosecute students. Word of BUS' plans spread like wildfire through the community as once again BUS was preparing to take collective action.

The next morning President White held a press conference to explain the University's stance on the BUS mass walkout:

Abrogation of these established procedures, now or in the future, by me would permit grievance in the future to be decided on the basis of threat of force in office. Certainly we do not want the university to be operable only under police surveillance... Mass walkouts are no substitute for rational and reasonable consideration of areas of concern and difference. (38)

From sun-up to sun-down on Monday, November 18th, black students organized and enlisted supporters to help set up a KSU "in exile". (39) In the early evening over 250 suitcase-carrying BUS members, which was probably more than two-thirds of the black student population, gathered in the Eastway Complex and silently marched across campus. Wearing white arm bands with "unity" written on them to symbolize amnesty, the group stopped at every dorm to amass more students.

Followed by a body of reporters and on-lookers, the peaceful demonstrators traveled past the Student Center and through the Prentice Gate on to Main Street. When they reached the end of campus they were met by an estimated crowd of 1,000 people composed of students, police, community activists, university officials, and rival groups. (40)

A motorcade met the protesters a block away from the university. Some students were taken to Cleveland, but most, including BUS' leadership, met at the Centenary Methodist Church in Akron. This place of worship became BUS' "base of operations" since they vowed to not return until all students were granted amnesty. (41)

At this point in time it has not been documented as to why BUS chose to join the Akron in protest. It is assumed that someone from within the internal core of BUS' leadership had a link to the city and probably the church. But at this time that is just speculation. What is known though, is that for the days that BUS had walked-off campus, KSU was a proverbial black ghost town! Not a black-faced student was in sight! The few who didn't support the protest went home, or left campus out of fear, but the majority of them, even the athletes, stood with BUS.

SDS did not walk off campus with BUS. Likewise, it was also not publicly known why the organization, which only endorsed violence and extreme protest after BUS returned to campus, chose to remain at KSU demonstrating outside of classrooms and handing out literature. Although, it has been documented that the organizations had "no ties" that bonded them together. (42)

Two days later, at an afternoon press conference, President White announced that the University wouldn't press charges against students who protested against the Oakland PD. He announced that KSU's legal counsel had advised the administration that "the evidence on hand was not sufficient to justify a conviction on state charges." (43) He also specified that "amnesty is a term used in forgiving convictions for political offenses and that 'amnesty' was an incorrect term used by the student organizations during the past week." (44) University officials were correct in defining the proper usage and context of the word "amnesty", but it must be noted that they supposedly couldn't "prove" that the sit-in was a violation of University procedure.

BUS had confronted and conquered its second crisis! The organization had taken control of its own destiny. The BUS victory was a direct result of the student group's self-fulfilling prophecy "acting on the basis of the definitions of reality we often create the very conditions we believe actually exist ... an assumption or prediction that, purely as a result of having been made, causes the expected event to occur and thus confirms its own 'accuracy'". (45) BUS' philosophy and action became the community-wide racial caste consciousness that allowed black students to champion Henry Austin's challenge. BUS stood up and defended itself "FREEDOM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!" (46)

BUS returned to campus on Thursday, November 21, after almost three days of protesting from outside of KSU. They were greeted by an entourage of sympathizers and supporters. A short rally was held at the Student Center where Milton Wilson, Dean of Human Relations, spoke on behalf of BUS. He declared:

Cognizant of the responsibilities of continuing courage, integrity, judgment, and dedication, we return to Kent State University. Dean Matson has said that the system must work. We say that it must work for black brothers and sisters. We return to help Dean Matson and President White test the viability of the system. We return to determine whether, in fact, it will work. (47)

1968 was the year that black students made their political presence known at KSU. Within four months they had formed an organization, protested a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and
blueprinted a plan of action that called for the mobilization and emigration of black students in protest against the University. Today it is believed that BUS was founded on May 8th, 1968. This is inaccurate. BUS had become organized and active weeks before that time.

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**Looking For The Core Values That Bring Us TOGETHER**

DR. TERRY KUHN

SPRING 1998
The Man Behind the Mask

By Arie Goodman
Illustration by Tom Feelings
It was seventeen years ago this March, that his waist-length dreads began to grow. Unsure if it is the length of his hair, the style of his clothing, or the feel of tranquility that is poured from his being that grabs your attention, it is apparent from a single encounter that Mwatabu Okantah is a man of confidence and consciousness. Aware of the successes in his life, he gives credit to the body that has nurtured his growth and development, the Department of Pan-African Studies in Oscar Ritchie Hall. In a previous interview with UHURU, Okantah stated, "I am a product of the Black Studies Department. I couldn’t be who I am; I couldn’t do what I do without those programs. If I had it to do all over again, I would go to Kent."

It was a track scholarship that brought Wilbur Smith Jr. to Kent State University from a middle class neighborhood in Vaux Hall, New Jersey. Unfortunately, his athletic career was short-lived due to knee injuries. He dropped out of school after two years and later returned to receive a bachelor’s degree in English and Pan African Studies. Smith continued his education at the City College of New York and attained a master’s in Creative Writing in 1978. It was also during that year that Wilbur Smith Jr. was laid to rest and that Mwatabu, a child born in the time of difficulty and sorrow, Sanyika, a gatherer of people, Okantah, breaker of rock, came into being.

i was in college
when i met
my first
African from Africa African.
he said
"I am from Afreeka."
i remember being confused.
if he was from Africa,
what
did that
make me?

stunned
into screaming silence,
i did not
sleep that night.
i spent
that night
looking into mirrors,
looking for Africa
in my own
face.

i looked into
questions.
what
was just American?
or Negro?
or colored?
or nigger?
or black
hyphen American?
i
did not know
how to see Africa
reflected
in my own face.
i did
not know

how to see Africa in America’s dark race.
i remember.*

To gain knowledge about his African culture and heritage, Okantah began by getting close to African students. He admits that the information hasn’t any real value in the university’s structure. "There are no incentives from the system to move toward this information." However, such information gives knowledge of self and teaches one how to function as a Black man/woman in this society. It is especially important for those of us with children. Attaining the information is necessary so that we may give it to our children. He suggests that parents, who are learning about their culture, include their children in the process. He advises that we, "Learn with your children. Give [the information] so that it has meaning in your lives . . . Try to live a certain way."

We are Africa—
this American version of we.
defeated
not broken.
undead.
suffering still.
new world
African am i.
our song sung deep
in the throat—
born in this time
to come
and not forget.

Afreeka*

A former Vice President of BUS, Okantah was involved in the sit-in at the Student Center in 1970. It is this history that obliges him to remind students and faculty that “this [Oscar Ritchie Hall] is the house that BUS built.” But much has happened to the organization since the days of protest and Black power. Characterized by students as being a popularity contest, Black United Students has had fewer people run for office than in previous years. In fact, there have been officers of the executive board that were elected without facing opposition. "It has lost its purpose for being," offers Okantah. "Not only BUS, but we as a people are too reactionary. We wait for what white people do to us. That is a serious weakness. We want the benefits without working for it."

To explain the apathetic behavior exhibited by our generation, Okantah attributes a great deal to the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. "We have access to an unprecedented number of things and we were not prepared for what would happen," he said. According to him, it is because of this that young Black people can no longer relate to certain things with which Black people used to identify. He goes on to explain that we, the next generation of leaders, have been conditioned not to be active by our parents, society, and even role models on this campus. Yet, he has not lost faith. He contends that the periodic Open Mic poetry readings sponsored by Harambee, for which he is the advisor, stand as proof of our consciousness. And though he’s not sure what motivates us, he contends that, “we are disciplined enough to do what we want to do.”

More apparent are the differences between the youth of our
generation and that of the Black United Students that fought for the establishment of the Institute of African American Affairs, currently the Department of Pan African Studies. He explains, "There was an actual movement amongst Blacks in the nation. Students felt very much a part of that movement and acted accordingly." He continued, "We did not expect to be treated the same as white students were being treated. That was our reality as Black people. We were raised that we would have to do more than whites to be in the same place as white people. [Unfortunately] we are not raising our young people like that anymore."

when
a people's spirit
is murdered,
what kind of life
lives in the eyes of those
who no longer
see?

holocaust.

how many fathers
dream their blackness in a bottle?
how many sons,
before they become fathers,
smoke their blackness
through a glass pipe?
battered
black men birth
sons.
broken men.

fathers. grandfathers husbands
uncles. boys brothers
suns:

from pyramid builders
to the cheap labor
too cheap to be needed
in the new prosperity-
black men. faceless.
black.

where are we today?
are we
today?*

Nothing is much like it was. Why should the Department of Pan African Studies be any different? Plagued with stories of conspiracies and betrayal, the Department of Pan African Studies has experienced dissension among colleagues as well as a call for the extraordinary review of the current chairperson, Dr. George Garrison, who has been accused of not working in the best interest of the Department. Though the results of the review have not yet been determined, the effect that it has had on morale is apparent. Okantah commented, "It's clear to me that there is a whole different set of rules when Oscar Ritchie is involved. You'd think that no one ever removed a chair before." He believes that the controversy has confirmed the university's perception of the department. "This department was created against the will of the university. They never wanted it. They are treating this situation as a means to get at the department."

Perhaps the more important issue is the effect that the internal problems have had on the students for whom the department is dedicated to serving. "Our own contradictions can undermine a lifetime of work, he said making reference to the rules and guidelines to be followed by students and faculty of the Department. "I see that happening." By some professors not practicing what they preach, students are left confused. Such problems, however, are not unique to the campus of Kent State. Similar programs find themselves in like circumstances. Okantah concludes, "These problems are national. We are engaged in a struggle over who's going to tell our story."

Controversy is nothing new to the man deemed one of "the many tongues of Pth." In his experience, there is no middle ground. People either like him or dislike him. Attributing some of these feelings to the mistaking of his confidence for arrogance, he is convinced that some do not listen to what he says. Instead, they have a preconceived notion based on his appearance and their insecurities. "Some call me the village idiot," he said. "I can then walk around the corner to be called the village genius. And I can walk even farther down the street and find someone who is indifferent. For me that's comforting... I know who I am. I try to stay focused with that so I won't be pulled off my center." He believes that the conclusion derived is ultimately a function of the observer's level of consciousness.

In general, Okantah believes that Black people have issues with which we must deal. In particular, we don't take the time to acknowledge our own diversity. He says that Black people do not need to have African names or clothes. Such measures are not for everyone. Even still, we tend to undermine the efforts of one another as exhibited by attacks on affirmative action by conservative Blacks. "If all we had to deal with were white people, it would be easy," he said. He suggests that we must, "first make strides to understand who we are as individuals and move toward like-mindedness."

It is in these groups of commonality that leaders will evolve. The belief that one leader can accommodate, represent and motivate the masses of Black people is a weakness according to Okantah. To be heard, leaders must meet people on common ground. They must relate to their audience. In contrast to the opinion that leaders are scarce in today's society, Okantah insists that we simply do not have access to those that are active in our communities. "The mainstream media are not going to put them on so that we can see them."

we
became this new world earth,
became a sculpture
from the one in ten who
survived the middle-

passage people,
only to become 20th century
strangers
to ourselves.

after a second reconstruction
the freed slaves
now collect their checks
and smile
their way
into submission.

they call Jim Crow James today.
negro firsts,
regular slave wages and college degrees
have face-
The phrase multicultural and diversity are heard in many facets of America. Yet, this has not been enough to persuade Okantah that the nation is moving toward a more racially tolerant society. He explains that, "Many of the people that we are being asked to accept into this diversity complex have very negative feelings about us as Black people." Nothing has occurred to make the notion of tolerance any more believable.

"The world has always been a diverse place," he continued. "The only people who don't know it are the white people that conquered the world. Diversity is their means of acknowledging that everybody in the world is not trying to be like them."

As of late, Okantah has been touring with the Cavani String Quartet. While reciting his poetry to music, they have taken this collaboration to major cities across the country. While he is enjoying the exposure, he is conscious of the fact that he is performing for predominantly white audiences. It seems that the accompanying musicians change the perception of the messenger and ultimately the message that he conveys.

In addition to his travels, Okantah has recently completed his fifth book entitled A Poem for the Living: Cheikh Anta Diop. It is the first of its kind to published in three different languages simultaneously. "The completion of the book was a validation of what I've been out here trying to do," said Okantah. And though he is pleased with the results, the process was long and difficult.

After several false starts, the poem began to flow when I real- ized I would have to write a very personal piece. Spady wanted a sweeping, grand epic that would give, not only the world-at-large, but, Africans in Africa a sense of who African-Americans have become as a people. He wanted a poem that began to suggest any impact Cheikh Anta Diop has had on the African-American search for a whole, and healthy ethnic identity. It took some time, but, I began to understand that this poem was not so much about Cheikh Anta Diop, as it was a poem rooted in the seemingly improbable transformation of a Wilbur Smith Jr. into a Mwatabu Okantah.*

To prepare for the task of writing about the intellectual giant, Cheikh Anta Diop, he revisited Africa. Having been there several times, he describes his first excursion as one of confirmation. "The biggest concern was that what I thought I knew, I didn't really know. Once there, I realized that the right choices had been made." Feeling at home in Africa, he returns there to "recharge his batteries." He admits that Africa is not ideal in many respects but that the notion of hard work paying off is most noticeable, making it a most attractive place to raise his family. In fact, it was in Africa that he first sensed acceptance without qualification as a writer. His works were treated with a "seriousness" not common in the United States. It was there, in a Senegalese community years ago, that he first experienced Blacks showing in huge numbers respecting him as a poet.

The completion of A Poem for the Living has left him with the time to realize his fortune. "I now have the time to be just who I am - this griot in the world." His vision and character require him to travel and as such, his time in Kent appears limited. "Destiny is moving me toward something else," he explained. To the dismay of many students and faculty, the influence and karma of Mwatabu Okantah may soon linger only in spirit. And though he contends that if he were to leave it would not necessarily be the result of forces trying to push him out of the Department, one must wonder how much the conflict played a part.

When asked about what he would like to be remembered for, he chuckled before answering intently. "Being consistent," he began. "And that I practice what I preach." After a pause he looked up before concluding that he would like, "to be perceived as having been in the vanguard . . . that this was not just a phase for me."

Whether you agree with him or not, you have to respect a man who can stand in the opposition of many. A figure in the renowned history of the Department of Pan African Studies, Okantah is a persona that brings life to the halls of Oscar Ritchie. A man, a father, a musician and a poet, the many hats worn by him have earned him the respect and admiration of his students and colleagues. And though we wish him well in his future endeavors, it would be irresponsible for us not to do everything imaginable to keep him present in mind, body and spirit to help maintain the house that BUS built.

Cheikh Anta Diop

Throughout most of his career, Diop was suppressed first by the French, and then by Senegalese authorities in cooperation with the French. Despite the many obstacles and road blocks placed before him, he refused to be denied. He quite literally forced the western establishment to acknowledge his re-writing of human history. His major premise that black people, during classical African antiquity, were creators of the first recorded human civilization in the Nile Valley effectively rescued African history from the tyranny, and imposed oblivion of European definition and control. . . As such, his legacy as scholar statesman and humanist points us forward into our future as African and African derived people. In the larger context, Diop's work places Africa, and African people, at the center of human development.*

* Excerpts taken from A Poem For The Living by Mwatabu Okantah
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1. The presentation of a painting of Oscar W. Ritchie to Mrs. Edith Ritchie, Dr. Ritchie's Widow, and to Mr. George Ritchie, his brother, by brother Ernest Pryor. The presentation took place during the dedication ceremony of the building in 1977. Brother Pryor is also the artist of the majority of the paintings on the first floor of Ritchie Hall.

2. Students come together for the walkout.

3. Professor Okantah speaking words of wisdom inside of Ritchie Hall.

4. One of numerous African drumming and dancing ensembles performed by Master Drummer Babatunde Olanjuni in the 1970's.
The Problem of African Centered Intellectual Leadership in the Academy

by Dr. Mark Christian
Arguably, one of the key factors in the continuing global struggle for people who can claim to have African heritage is the crisis of intellectual leadership. Most thinkers would probably agree that intellectual leadership is a fundamental requisite for the constructive development of African Diaspora communities.(1) Yet, in assessing this social phenomena, the African centered intellectual should not approach the concept of ‘leadership’ in a willfully fashion. That is, for instance, by taking for granted what intellectual leadership means from an African centered perspective. Indeed, for an African centered intellectual to lead successfully he or she ought to have the necessary skills and knowledge to interact with the given constituency.

This begs the questions: is there an African centered intellectual perspective? If so, what are the necessary skills and abilities required in order to be a competent African centered intellectual? This article aims to flesh out these questions and provide a few fundamental points regarding what is good and what is bad practice in terms of intellectual leadership. Drawing primarily from the world of the academy since the mid-1960s, a major aim is to focus on the social factors that determine someone in an African centered intellectual leadership role to, consciously or unconsciously, display either negative or positive intellectual characteristics. To put it another way, in discussing the pros and cons of African centered intellectual leadership, there will emerge a frame of reference that could be employed for further discussion and debate. Crucially, it is in good communication that a more productive knowledge base grows and this is the central aim. Moreover, those scholar/activists who are involved in developing an African centered epistemology would no doubt concur, at the close of a millennium and at the dawn of a new one, that there is a dire need for this type of analytical focus.

**Power Relations and What It Is To Be A “Black Intellectual”**

Power in the hands of the wrong person will inevitably lead to social chaos. It matters little whether the person holding power is male or female. The main criteria for African centered leadership is for the person in power to acknowledge the African proverb: I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am. In other words, there should be no hierarchy within power relations among the given African centered intellectual community. Neither, it should be added, can there be a power distinction based upon gender. In short, to be African centered and based in a power-position in the academy means having to acquire a practical insight into the notion of power-sharing. This is an imperative in forging positive and egalitarian power-sharing relations within a given African centered academic setting.

Many of the Black Studies Departments that emerged in the mid-1960s developed leadership based on the premise of “academic excellence and social responsibility.” In a recent interview with the author, a pioneer of the struggle for an African centered perspective in education, Dr. Edward W. Crosby, stated that “Black intellectual leadership has yet to be clearly defined.” (2) This is a very critical point to reflect upon as it comes from a man who has effectively dedicated his life to the development of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University. What may sound superficial is in actual fact rather profound. If indeed there is still a need to define what it is to be a “Black intellectual” in the late 1990s, why is this so? Is it due to there being such a diverse scope of Black or African centered intellectual craftsmanship? Or is it due, paradoxically, to the fact that an African centered intellectual in the “Western sense” mainly operates in the domain of a predominantly White educational setting in the academy? These questions are not easy to answer outright or in any definitive sense. Nevertheless they do provide a way to consider what the role of a contemporary African centered intellectual entails. Writing from an African American perspective, Cornel West views the dilemma of the “Black intellectual” in this manner:

The Contemporary Black intellectual faces a firm predicament. Caught between an insolent American society and an insouciant black community, the African American who takes seriously the life of the mind inhabits an isolated and insulated world. This condition has little to do with motives and intentions of black intellectuals, rather it is an objective situation created by circumstances not of their own choosing.(3)

West, who is regarded as one of the African American “elite” intellectuals, rightly acknowledges the fact that a Black intellectual in the Western academy occupies and performs in a rather marginalized space. Indeed, as West suggests, in general the career of a Black intellectual is often characterized by loneliness, lack of recognition and support. However, a major problem with his overall analysis is that he generalizes what a “Black intellectual” represents in the academy. In this sense West offers a homogeneous representation and fails to consider the fact that Black intellectuals are highly diverse in what they stand for and intellectually create in the academy. In short, it is too superficial to analyze a “Black intellectual” as a one-dimensional “ideal type.” For example, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Molefi K. Asante are both of African American descent and would ordinarily be considered as “Black intellectuals.” Yet this is where the similarity ends, as they each come from different schools of thought within the academy. In addition, coming from a particular school of thought within the academy fundamentally determines how a Black intellectual operates as a leader in the African Diaspora. Therefore what it is to be a Black scholar is far from being clearly defined. Again, Dr. Crosby is informative in his struggle to come to terms with what it

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*SPRING 1998*
is to be an African centered scholar in the academy, as he states:

The first thing we have to come to grips with is terminology. I am not sure whether I go along with the classic definition of a “Black scholar”. . . If you look at it from my point of view, am I supposed to produce people [in the academy] who write things that collect dust in libraries? You know, is that my role? Or is it my role to produce people who can interconnect with these young ones out here [meaning the masses of Black youth in US society], the ones that we [as Black scholars] are supposed to be dealing with? . . . I would rather have a young person who thinks and creates. There is an action-orientation that I am looking for. And the creation can go in a number of different directions. It can go to paper and ink, or it can go to bricks and mortar. It can go in a number of different areas. And however it went I would call this person a scholar. You see it is the action-orientation that I want to get to as opposed to the passive thing. (5)

Dr. Crosby puts forward a significant and practical perspective in relation to the possible role of an African centered scholar/activist. He is not convinced that there is a clear definition of what it is to be a “Black scholar” in a predominantly white university setting. Yet he is adamant that, within a Pan-African context, African centered scholars ought to be helping to produce young people equipped with both mental and practical skills that can be of service to the broader community. Essentially, Dr. Crosby is relating to the notion of “academic excellence and social responsibility.” It is very important to note then the different approaches in understanding the role of an African centered scholar and leader. There is no concrete definition, but it can be said that scholars are either inactive or active with the broader African Diasporan community. That is, some are discon-}

ected and others are connected to the community. In view of this, let us now briefly consider what a negative and a positive action-orientated mode of behavior can involve regarding the African centered scholar.

**Negative and Positive African Centered Leadership in the Academy**

In terms of the state of Pan-African orientated departments and leadership in the academy, we can use the example of African independence leaders to elucidate both the negative and positive leadership qualities. In an address to delegates of a mock Organization of African Unity (OAU) at Howard University, Dr. Solomon Gomez, from the New York Headquarters of the OAU, stated that “leaders have to serve not rule.” (6) This is a significant and specific position to take from an African centered perspective. Indeed too often in the past, and present, African centered leaders have led in a manner that could not be deemed conducive to serving the interests of the given African descended constituency.

Again, drawing from the analysis of Dr. Gomez, a number of key African independence leaders that emerged on the continent in the 1950s and 1960s took control of their respective nations from the erstwhile colonial rulers only to enforce coercive, militaristic or dictatorial, regimes. By and large the leadership style of the African head of state was deleterious to the positive and democratic development of the entire nation. For instance, both Uganda under President Idi Amin and Zaire under President Sese Mobutu are evident case studies of negative African centered leadership qualities. (7) Both Amin and Mobutu failed to serve the masses in their respective nations. They instead glorified themselves as African heads of state while their people suffered from tremendous socioeconomic deprivation.

We can learn major lessons in studying the mistakes of African independence leaders. Indeed too often African centered leadership in the academy has resorted to dictatorial and/or megalomaniac modes of behavior. For example, rather than adopting a collective working relationship among faculty, staff and students, some Pan-African/Black Studies Department heads have endeavored to promote themselves over and above those they are supposed to be serving. (8) This is a negative mode of leadership in African centered intellectual enterprise.

Alternatively, a positive approach in African centered leadership in the academy would entail a number of prerequisites. First, the designated leader of a Pan-African Studies Department should be grounded in the history of African liberation struggles. Second, he or she must understand the interconnection between the “life of the mind” and the practical realities of the given African/Black community. In other words there is no room for aloofness in one’s day-to-day activities as the designated leader. In point of fact the African centered scholar leader has to make a greater effort to connect with the life and soul of the student body, staff and faculty. Third, in a positive mode of behavior the African centered scholar/leader should ordinarily adopt a humble approach to his/her position as “leader.” There is no place for haughtiness and an authoritarian/militaristic mindset in the African centered learning environment. One should lead with dignity and give respect to his or her colleagues. Fourth, one must give priority to developing the student population under the auspices of the African centered educational setting. That means being actively involved with the African centered student organizations. Especially in terms of giving them support and recognition within the university surroundings. Moreover, the African centered intellectual leader ought to provide active evidence of support for the students. To put it another way, the leader has to be visible and participate in the growth and development of the students. In short, if a person privileged with the task of being an African centered intellectual fails to follow the above positive points in being a pro-
ductive leader then he or she cannot be deemed worthy of holding such a significant position.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to raise the issue of African centered leadership within the academy. The skills required of an African centered intellectual leader in the late 1990s involve being connected to the historical struggle of African descended peoples. However, one also needs to be aware of the contemporary terrain. This means having the foresight and vision to go beyond the petty and trivial in order to forge harmonious relations within the given community of intellectuals and students. Harold Cruse in his classic text The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual called upon the African American intellectual community not to commit the mistakes of the past by being historically short-sighted. (9) Over thirty years, Cruse’s analysis still makes sense and if African centered education is to have a stake in the academy come the next millennium there is a need to prepare for it now. Among other things, this will entail developing leaders in the academy who are in tune with African centered thinking and practice. Above all, they must be proactive leaders who are willing and able to serve positively the needs of the student population and the broader community. Crucially, megalomania has no home in a contemporary African centered worldview.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. Edward W. Crosby for giving up his time to be interviewed. A special thank you to Shirley Crosby for her hospitality. Finally, I am indebted to many African centered scholar/activists who have shared their knowledge with me via their published works or in private conversation. However I accept full responsibility in terms of the interpretation of their collective ideas within this article.

Notes and References

[1] My focus here is primarily on the African Diaspora in terms of the UK and USA. However, I do realize that this discussion could relate to many other African Diasporan communities. Moreover, it could also have significance for African nations that were once under the yoke of European colonialism. Finally, the term “Black” here refers to persons who can claim African heritage.
[4] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Molefi K. Asante are distinguished scholars in African American culture, yet have extreme intellectual differences in terms of their respective orientation to the data. Gates has been, for example, a major critic of Afrocenricity. While Asante would argue that Gates is “at home” in Eurocentric academic circles, hence his dislike of African centered scholarship. Finally, Gates is more aloof and elitist compared to Asante in relation to working with the broader African American grassroots communities. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Colored People (Vintage, 1995) and Molefi K. Asante Afrocenricity (African World Press, 1988). For an historical survey of African American intellectuals see William M. Banks Black Intellectuals (W. W. Norton, 1994).
[7] Idi Amin was ousted from Uganda in 1979 and went into exile in Libya. Sese Mobutu was ousted from Zaire in 1997, he died the same year from prostate cancer.
[8] This observation comes from my experience as both a Master’s degree student in Black Studies at Ohio State University (1992/3) and as a senior Fulbright Scholar and Professor of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University.
It can be argued that 1969 was the single most important year in the history of Black United Students. Most of the advancements made by BUS during 1969 alone are the same rituals, ceremonies, and events that are still practiced today within the organization. Other circumstances and happenings that occurred at this time presently impact the black student community though they have been transformed according to the needs and desires of black students. The academic year was politically quiet for BUS; which is probably related to the turmoil that boiled over from 1968. It seems as if the university responded to BUS’ every need, which enabled it to focus on building an environment that was conducive to the black experience at KSU.

The year began with a realignment of the inner “institutions”, or organizational positions, on the BUS Executive Board. Six new leadership chairs were implemented as well as the call for a “president” rather than the “co-chairmanship” that had led the group the previous year. These new positions were: communications, cultural, defense, economic, educational, and social. These chairs constituted the “policy and effected the implementation and efficient coordination of the various institutions.” (49)

The next order of business for BUS was to construct a channel of communication with black students on their own terms, away from the university’s mainstream press. Thus, under the editorship of Erwind Blount, BUS was allocated funding in order to establish the Black Watch newsletter, which was first published an October 7th, 1969. According to an early article, the mission of the publication was as follows:

The Black Watch’s aim is to bring you the ever changing and startling changes of Black People, wherever we happen to reside. As a People who are always on the move, many of our accomplishments and feats are often ignored by ‘popular’ mass media. Here at Kent State the Black Watch hopes to fill the void the mass media creates regarding Black affairs. (50)

The newspaper was published monthly and was packed with news. On average it was sixteen pages on 12x16 newsprint, all relative to the black experience. It covered the Black Panthers very closely and also relayed information concerning the larger nation-wide black movement. The newspaper also allowed for direct communication between the individual BUS institutions and the black student community. Plus, it covered campus news relative to black students from a black perspective - something the Stater could never do. But around this time, there was a strong black intellectual influence in the Stater. Both Robert Pickett and Lafayette Tolliver, who was also a news-reporter for the Black Watch, wrote for the University’s primary publication. Thus, BUS had several voices that could tap into the University’s mainstream public conscious. Tolliver’s “Basic Black” columns covered issues such as the African roots of Jesus Christ, the philosophy of White Supremacy, and the idea of the “New Nigger.” (51) Pickett discussed the political ramifications of government policy on the black community and even went so far as to explain how the space mission, Apollo 13, may have been a calculated “hoax” in hopes to re-elect President Nixon (52)

But the Black Watch remained as the most important vessel for BUS political and social communication. As stated earlier, there was no crisis that called for the mobilization of black students in protest against the university. But this didn’t stop the Black Watch from being extremely political. Writers attacked “pseudo-revolutionaries” who wore “red, black, and green, but do not know what the colors mean.”(53) They also openly embraced Maulana Karenga’s Afrikan centered value system, the Nguzu Saba, reiterating that, “We must take things which were tradition and apply them to the concrete needs of black people here in America.”(54)

Also, black students staunchly supported the idea of a “Black Education” at KSU. (55) Plans and ideas that were discussed in the ultimately were brought to the table when the Institute for Afro-American Affairs (IAAA) became a possibility.

The IAAA was founded on May 8, 1969. This cultural and academic institution, which was based on the black experience, became a reality through the efforts of BUS. The first course offered was “Toward a Black Cosmology and Aesthetic”. (56) According to an early document, one of the missions of a black education taught at KSU was that:

Black education must seek to rid itself of the typical lock-step pattern of American education. That is, it must seek to establish a fully interdisciplinary approach to education, for knowledge cannot be compartmentalized and dispensed for individual courses. All aspects of the human experience are interrelated and must be taught as such. (57)

Dr. Edward W. Crosby assumed his duties as Director of the IAAA in mid-August. Crosby’s balanced philosophy of learning was similar to that of the institute’s: “I feel that it is my job literally, to begin to re-devise the process under

1969

COMMUNAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH
which Black folk are educated. That is, to put a Black perspective on various courses such as history, literature, physics, and so on.” (59) This is the very type of education that black students had requisitioned. They were searching for accurate interpretations of their history, culture, and way of life as a people. In many ways, once black students accepted Henry Austin’s challenge of organizing, they had also committed themselves to a black education. The two went hand-in-hand as one could not properly sustain itself without the other.

Dr. Crosby provided the philosophical and educational blueprint that guided the IAAA. As an elder in the community, his objectives and goals impacted the entire university, especially by inspiring BUS to create the Black Cultural Center, which was also founded in 1969.

The Black Cultural Center was a student-run facility designed to “celebrate the survival, existence, and aspirations of black people, provide educational, social, and cultural programs and materials which will foster an understanding and acceptance of, appreciation for, and commitment to the full actualization and expression of black people.” (61) The Center was located in the “Ward House” or “Kuumba House”, which was a three-story, free-standing building that was also home to the executive offices of BUS.

The establishment of the Center was a great accomplishment, but there was one problem; it wasn’t an autonomous organization with independent leadership. Instead, the Center fell under the joint control of both the Human Relations Center and the IAAA. Ironically, these two institutions, which were both established through the efforts of BUS, were “plagued by ideological differences”. (62) Black administrators could not agree on a philosophy for the Black Cultural Center to be built upon. Since the Center was established by BUS, which was moving closer to Black Nationalist thought and practice, theoretically this institution should have been built upon nationalist foundation. At this point, there is no explanation as to why BUS was not initially involved in the philosophical debate concerning the Center. As a result, BUS stepped in and used the offices of the Center as a “base for political movements and for revolutionary cultural activities”. (63) This idea was best illustrated in the writing of BUS member Abdullah Shabazz:

In order to LIVE, culture must be a way of life. A Black must learn how to live over again since the culture that has been forced on Black people in America is totally unsuitable for our natural being... Change in culture means a change in values, change of models and a change of epistemology, or how we perceive things. Once our values and value system change we will no longer want the same things; we will no longer put up with the same things. (64)

The organizational cohesion within BUS allowed it to create a social climate that was reflective of black student interests. The group sponsored the first Black Arts Festival which took place during Black Weekend. This event allowed black students to display their talents and “express the goals of Black people and the Beauty of Blackness.” (65) BUS also organized the “Queen Mwesi Ball” or “Black Ball” where 300 Black students came dressed in African clothing ready to compete for honor. Richie Havens, a popular guitarist at the time, agreed to perform a benefit concert in hopes of raising money for the Black Cultural Center. It was also rumored that KSU was the first university in the United States to celebrate “Black History Week”, which was expanded into a month-long program the following year. (66)

“Malcolm X Day,” which was sponsored by BUS, was first celebrated in 1969, as well as the “Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Day”, which was backed by Alpha Phi Alpha, a black fraternity. Also there was “Think Week”, a university wide event that BUS and Student Government organized around the topic, “The Black Man in Society”. The week featured on-campus speeches by Muhammad Ali, Charles Evers, and Le Roi Jones, known today as Amiri Baraka. It ended with David Ruffin, a former member of the Temptations, performing in concert. (67)

1969 was probably the most important year in the history of BUS and the black community at KSU. It was the year that black students reap the benefits from their struggle in 1968, which opened the door for key advancements for long term goals: black students committed to intellectualism within the framework of a black education, they founded the Black Watch, made strides toward establishing institutions that promoted black culture and education, plus they created a social environment for black people to feel comfortable in. No other year in the history of BUS has had this type of proactive initiative. In 1969, BUS blossomed through communal and organizational growth.
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Carol A. Cartwright
President Carol A. Cartwright
We, at UHURU, often receive letters from incarcerated brothers and sisters who are eager to share and acquire knowledge. We would like to take this opportunity to share one such message from one of our readers. It is befitting that such a composition be featured in this, our Leadership Edition, for an encouraging word may be heard in church, in school, and even from a jail cell. Please take heed to the words of this man who has seen the errors of his ways and is seeking to better the community by sharing the lessons that he has learned.

Dear Future Lawyers, Doctors and Politicians,

I’ve had the pleasure of reading your booklet, UHURU and I must say it was motivating and interesting. A young lady from Kent State came to this institution and brought with her UHURU, hoping to share with [a friend] and others some positive reading material. Before I go any further, I want to say that the work you all put into the booklet encouraged me to write back.

After reading through the ’96 and ’97 issues, I really felt that African Americans have some sort of unity in a positive way. The more I read it the more hungry I became between the ears. The reason I say this is because I love to see us uniting and promoting our “blackness.”

I noticed in the back of the book that you encouraged people to submit material. Even though I’m not a student, I felt a need to have some input. The reason I say this is because in the past I’ve victimized my own people and I’m remorseful. Now I want to help someone who might be getting an education, but at the same time living the street life. Hopefully, by hearing this, they may change their ways. . .

Reality

Far from a dream is a plain soreness for some
For others it is a learning experience called REALITY.
You’re sitting, thinking about yesterday, and last year’s
dream which consisted of Nike signs, music, women with
big bottoms and careless thoughts. . .

Now thoughts are clear and sober,
and no longer having dreams because we live in REALITY

Now. . .

Close your eyes and all you hear is poison
coming from one mouth to many ears.
Speaking of past and great experiences, but now. . .
we live in REALITY.

I hear people yelling of (football games),
I hear (keys clanging),
I hear (What’s for chow?)
Like I’m an animal.

I hear lies from people
promising to write once they reach their dream again.
I hear crying when people are laughing,
trying to disguise how they really feel. . .

Because this REALITY is nothing to laugh about or worship.

I see many people
and finally realize that they have so much to say,
but their words are a REALITY CHECK
called hollow-meaningless. (Understand?)

Everyone walks and talks tough,
but inside is an infant
defecating on their brains.

Where am I?
I live in REALITY. . .

PRISON.
Time passes. Days go by, but everyday feels as if it is Sunday. Sundays, in my household, were a family day that became less exciting by the year. So that’s how the days feel here, boring.

First, you must understand that I’m coming from my point of view. I live this REALITY day to day. Second, you need to know that for me, every second in here is more precious than where you sit now. The reason I say this is because I’m around a lot of people all the time and I’ve learned to study them. You could sit next to someone and if they’re having a bad day, they might get a little snappy at the mouth, unless they are postal workers. (Ha Ha). I could be sitting next to someone who fantasizes about little boys in diapers. Yet he portrays himself as a civilized human being. Imagine if he has a bad day. It sounds harsh, but this is REALITY to me and could be for you too if you think that the materialistic life is a plus. That’s why I am writing in disgust.

Everyone in here, including myself, was more focused on being that “Stylish Nigga.” Now I see I was stylish on the outside, wearing a costume to please the eyes that lurk over me and talking of fictitious stories—like I really lived the life of Scarface myself. If I’m talking to any of you and you feel uncomfortable, then I am doing good. This REALITY is breaking our people off something proper… for real.

Anyway, imagine a person that you can’t get along with no matter what the circumstances. Now imagine having two—three thousand of them surrounding you all day. Even more, imagine that you’re living in a basement with them for the course of four or five years and even after all of that time, you still don’t like them. I relate the basement to jail because it is small and overcrowded, dusty, may flood from time to time, and there’s nothing in the basement that ever seems to amaze you.

Your enemies converse all day long, talking about past experiences, gun play, parole and how they’re going to get high when they step. Then they talk about how they slapped their bitch. This is how their brains work. They’ll call her a bitch to their boys then call her collect. I don’t think a bitch would accept - Do you? Being like them is common because if you don’t talk and walk like them, then you can’t be a part of their circle and you’ll be a loner. You hear about drugs, cars, women and money all day. Can you imagine hearing this all day? It’s sickening when our people are more focused on dirt than soap.

Now these people will not seek to rape anyone in the next twenty-four hours because these fags, punks, gumpies, or cum drunks came through and pleased the booty bandits. REALITY. Keep in mind that this happens in a small place, like a basement. Some are hiding; others have no shame. Things that seem to be inhumane, become acceptable, even normal, in here. The task is keeping your sanity so that when you go home to your family, you won’t seem out of place - as if prison were normal.

Have you ever seen the movie Dead Presidents? Remember when he came home from Vietnam and he was eating like a starved, savage beast. It was perfectly normal to him. Yet, his parents looked at him like he needed to go back where he came from. Jail is Vietnam. Anything goes and you get so used to doing it that it’s like brushing your teeth. REALITY.

Ohio slaps up all these prisons every year. The prisons designed today are for kids who have never been here. And when they do come, they get certain protection so they can do five to ten years “easy.” This makes it easier for a person to come back over and over. When you, your little sister or brother come here and see it’s not like the movies portray it to be, it’s easy to go back and relive the past on the streets—or in school. Next thing you know, you’re back in prison, realizing that prison ain’t nothing easy.

They say his-story repeats itself. But yours and my story might repeat itself if we don’t find a solution. We should, as a people, concentrate on our family values, education, spiritual guidance, honesty and communication throughout our lives. I used to have a big problem with this, but a two and a half to ten year sentence for selling drugs changed my dreams to REALITY. Everything that is obnoxious and ignorant goes on in here and it is acceptable. Their goal is not to rehabilitate you because they like to see us carrying ourselves like we’re ignorant. They will not correct you. You must put a REALITY CHECK on yourself. A lot of guys in here would call me a lame or a sucker because of what I think of them and myself. But I’ll tell you this: I’d rather be where the lames are instead of where the thugs out diplomats dwell - on death row.

Life is a REALITY, not a dream anymore.

Sincerely,
D. Holt

Convicted physically, not mentally
We must make an issue, create an event, and establish a position for ourselves. It is glorious to think of, but far more glorious to carry out.
-Martin Robinson Delany (1854)

In the Beginning

The Black United Students (BUS) was first organized on May 21, 1968 and was instrumental in establishing the University’s Learning Development Program (1968), which is now administered by the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, the Institute for African American Affairs (1969), the Center of Pan-African Culture (1972), and the Department of Pan African Studies (1976). The establishment of these campus institutions was the direct result of 95 percent of the University’s African student body walking off the campus in protest of the racist treatment they were receiving and the absence of educational support programs. In keeping with its institutional change objectives, BUS was also the motive force behind the dedication of the “Old Student Union” in honor of Dr. Oscar W. Ritchie in 1977. Worthy of note here is the fact that BUS was founded with the unified action of all the fraternities and sororities on the campus. For example, Larry Simpson, BUS’ first president, was an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi. Membership in the Black United Students was, and still is, open to all students at Kent State University who are willing to struggle for the educational, cultural, political, and social advancement of African peoples throughout the world.

Organizational Strengths

The Executive Board of the Black United Students from the beginning consisted of two executive officers: the President, the Executive Secretary and six Ministers: Grievance, Culture, Social, Information, Education, and Economics. These officers were the equivalents of the current Executive Board structure with some minor differences: President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, and Treasurer and six Standing Committee Chairs: Programmer, African Affairs, Community Affairs, Political Affairs and Grievances, Academic Affairs, and Publicity. If there were any discernible difference at all, it derived from BUS’ early attempt to imitate the structure of the Black Panther Party. Nevertheless, during the 1980s, the leadership of BUS controlled a budget in excess of $50,000, not including the funds awarded other black student organizations.

Over a period of three decades, BUS’ male and female leadership demonstrated a seriousness, commitment and dedication to duty not expected in young people. In keeping with the educational mandate passed to the Institute for African American Affairs (IAAA), and later to DPAS by the Black United Students, a set of Operational Imperatives was developed. These imperatives were designed to maintain a viable academic, cultural, social and administrative working relationship between this organization and DPAS. This working relationship encompassed all aspects of the Department’s curricular divisions, programs, and activities which directly impact student concerns. To affect the orderly implementation of the relationship between BUS and DPAS, the president of BUS, or his/her designate, has been authorized to attend all faculty and staff, curriculum committee, or special purpose meetings whose deliberations warrant student input. In the fall, the Department hosts orientation or transition workshops for the newly installed officers of BUS.

The Department, for obvious reasons, supports the underlying philosophy of the Black United Students which is to serve and unify all the black students at Kent State University by addressing their needs. BUS seeks to identify relevant issues and initiate appropriate action, whenever and wherever necessary, in order to either reduce or eliminate any impediments found to be adverse to the continued well-being, matriculation, and graduation of
African American students. Social, cultural, and educational programs, activities and ideas have been generated that relate to the past, present, and future goals and aspirations of African people for this express purpose.

Organizational Accomplishments

BUS has remained consistent in the provision of enriching experiences and assuring the continuing development of a progressive environment which is conducive to encouraging success among black students in their quest to obtain a quality and meaningful education. The annual Renaissance Ball and Ebony Achievement Awards ceremonies attest to this. Nowhere is this more evident than the work BUS did to increase the numbers of black undergraduate and graduate students enrolled, but also the numbers of black faculty and staff hired at the University. It must also be recognized, and indeed celebrated, that when BUS argued for the creation of the Institute and the Department, they were ultimately creating jobs for forty-seven full and part-time individuals - white and black students, faculty and staff. At least this was the number of faculty and staff DPAS hired in 1994. Taken a step further, they were creating jobs for eminently larger numbers of African Americans on the Kent State University campus at large.

The Black United Students have been, as pointed out earlier, the initiators of the process that created, not only the Department's academic programs and jobs, but also several institutions and programs on the campus. For no other organization, including the Undergraduate Student Senate, has created an academic department, a learning development program, and an organization as important as BUS Line, a dormitory security force now a part of Residence Services' Campus Security.

What is singularly remarkable is that all of these BUS-initiated programs have remained viable for twenty or thirty years. Having done so, BUS has become a standout among all student organizations on this campus and in the nation-at-large for that matter.

Publications and Community Programming

BUS published during the 1969-70 academic year a monthly newspaper, Black Watch, and had a publication committee that was advised by Wiley Smith III. This publication began as a mimeographed newsheet in 1969 and evolved into a standard newspaper when the IAAA decided to fund it. However, in September 1970, Robert L. White, president of Kent State University, threatened Dr. E. W. Crosby, chair of DPAS, with House Bill 1219. This was a law passed by the Ohio State Legislature to suppress student and faculty activism on state university campuses; it is still enforceable today. Black Watch, therefore, ceased its publication and initiated another publication, Spectrum, which enjoyed more secure, and in the University's terms, legitimate funding from the Student Publications Policy Committee. At first, Spectrum was published in newspaper format similar to Black Watch. In 1985, Spectrum's layout changed to that of a magazine, with a slick cover and all, and continued publishing until its modification. Under the editorial leadership of Kecia E. Cole, the student journal became UHURU in 1989. This modernized version continues to be published each fall and spring semester. As a direct result of Kecia's labors and the labors of those editors who succeeded her, this student journal has not, to my knowledge, been replicated in its professionalism on many university or college campuses throughout the nation.

A special program of the Black United Students is the Progressive Education Community School (PECS), an alternative education program created in 1968. The school meets each Saturday of the school year and enrolls children 4 to 17 years of age from the Kent, Ravenna and Streetsboro communities. PECS provides these children with Africentric educational, cultural services and a free lunch and breakfast provided as a service by fraternities, sororities and other black student organizations. In the summers, PECS also provided daily breakfasts and lunches through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Program. BUS' goal was to meet the cultural, nutritional and educational needs for these children so they will stay in school and have an interest in attending Kent State University, or any college of their choice for that matter, in the future.

A Performance Record Par Excellence

Indeed as mentioned earlier, BUS itself is a national standout. The leaders of this student organization - past and present - have outperformed their African elders on this and many other campuses. For they have refused to be passive participants in this educational journey. They have dared to think and make happen. BUS leaders have been, therefore, living tributes to the ancestors on whose shoulders they stood and from whom they sprang upward. The Department must, out of due deference, continue to consider itself in league with these students and strive unrelentingly to keep the above stated facts alive in the minds of new generations of University administrators, African American students generally, other students, faculty, and staff.

By Edward W. Crosby Ph.D.
Chair and Professor Emeritus Pan-African Studies and Germanic Languages and Literature

SPRING 1998 25
Dedicated to Abner Louima

As time passes
We hope
For better
But we are stuck with a blindfold

As we sit to dream
His shattered bone

A man's livelihood
Becomes bloodsport

Bruised
A bloodstained wall
With your lies written all over it

You sicken me
And pacify the masses
Under the guise, "Serve and Protect"

Broken skin
His blood
Like the blood of 1492 'til today

His blood
A reflection
Of a time
And age
That has never faded

As we had in agreement
Our souls
Are cast
Into the cesspool
As we agree
To always agree
The blood continues to flow
And the mass' cries
Are forcefully silenced

Birth of hope
A struggle
To regain the meaning of
Lost humanity

It's tonight
That I sit here
In comfort
Reassert my hold
On all my paths

Your eyes
Don't lie
Your pain
Immeasurable

Remove the blindfold
By Mark Bouchu Jr.

Ain't Nothing Changed

Once again White people complaining
About things they know nothing about
No doubt
They will pass their ignorance
Onto their kids

To keep inflicting racism on my people
I thought all men
Were created equal?

I guess that's only the sugar

How dare you insult my race
Belittling the contributions
My people made
You don't like Black History Month
Cause you still want Black people to be slaves

Anyway, learn the truth before you speak
Black History is your history
It is American History

How can you complain about
One month
When all the other 11 months are white history

White history month is everyday
7 days a week
From kindergarten to college
We learn Eurocentric ideology

Just because Black people sold other slaves
Does not excuse you from
Raping our women
Whipping our men
Selling our children
Lynching
Water hoses
Police dogs
Being considered 3/5th human
And all the other atrocities
You have committed against my people

I don't want to hear your complaints
about Affirmative Action
White folks have had that for years
On every job
In every school
In every court
On every golf course
You see we did more than just
Make something out of ourselves
Martin Luther King Jr. changed America
With his rhetoric
For all man kind
White people are so naive and blind

Let's go back in time
to the Black intelligent minds
That invented the
Lawn mower
The ironing board
The traffic light
Even the pencil that you use
To write your lies
Was created by my ancestors
That you despise

In "God We Trust"
Is on paper only

You disregarded humanity
For greed
The people who created pyramids
Look similar to me

So, before you make a fool of yourself again
Think about all the sins that have been committed
Because of the color of my race
Tell me,
Would you think the same
If you had a Black face?

By Kelly A. Harris
(In response to Robert Ward's article in the Kent Stater regarding the importance of Black History)

**Farewell Chief**

Many call it baseball on the Cleveland Lakefront
But I call it a distasteful depiction
Of a distant nation
That you and I should be partial to
Because you and I are partial of
The repeated beating of rhythmic percussion
Implies a tribe of ruthless
Warriors, mere savages

I beg to differ
What a name to label an entire culture
Especially coming from European refugees
With a recipe of disease and violence
Not to mention destruction as their specialty
Who's uncivilized?

To disgrace an entire race
By painting your face
As you hoop and holler

Maybe the tribal outburst
Were cries for help
Because we all know what
You put them through

A man I met two weeks ago
Broke it all down
To me and through me and others
He hoped to reach an entire generation of Wahoo lovers

Don't get me wrong
I've been rooting for the tribe
Since the Joe Carter days

But if the name and the mascot stays
I'll be reluctant to purchase
Any memorabilia as I cheer
From below the surface

The man stated it was not just Wahoo
That he hated
Seminoles, Braves, Blackhawks, Chiefs, Aztecs, Fighting Illini
Are just a few that come to mind

How could I have been so blind?
If a mockery was made of our kind
Every one of us would be
Ranting and raving in protest line

My Wahoo apparel
Will no longer be drapped across my body
As a show of blatant racism
I feel ashamed for the days when it was

The indigenous Americans were mentally enslaved
By those who came from caves
Free your mind

And show respect
For we all reside in
The original home of the Brave.

By Fred Wheatt

**Ain't No Sunshine...**

Ain't no sun shining
on this side of the street–another morning
with clouds to gather and darken my reality
The brotha' said, 'no disrespect to the sistas'. He preferred a lighter shade
no particular reason though just the way his mind was made. humph. . .
No disrespect taken
his preference he fails to understand
he falls short-the drill has been embedded
We've all been shafted by the man.
You wonder what this means
I know--
allow me just one moment
to disclose a bit of what I know
I say, myself, oh, I love all the bros'
no darkness do I mind
Yet my liking leans toward chocolate–you see
my ignorance has also made me blind
"De massa' take us we just nigras' while the fair one worked the house. . .
and now my mind is all confused–my darkness held
no clout!

Weren't no sunshine making them long hot days pleasant to pass
as today the sunshine fails my people
whose skin
has made them glass
Look through the bodies to the lighter shades
behind them
in the line
reject their natural hair, this call is a for a texture smooth and fine
Ain't no sunshine when I can't decide if I am for or against a tone
too dark-too light
better left alone. . .
Ain't no sunshine because our beauty ain't the mold

SPRING 1998
The exotic colors and designs placed upon my face ceremonial gown wrapped snugly upon my caramel body my body cascading with gold. Berries for fragrance I AM QUEEN

The exotic colors and designs taken off my face ceremonial gowns turned to rags loosely falling from my caramel body. My body cascading with silver chains stale water splashed upon me I AM SLAVE

Not given a job because of my caramel body not being respected because of my caramel body being treated unjustly, but not for long because my caramel body was once queen and I shall reign again I AM A BLACK WOMAN

By Ayanna E. Nelson Illustration by Keytsa Warren

How Sweet?

How sweet it would be if hues of chocolatey sweet and afros with hints of ethnicity redefined perceptions of sweetness and beauty and negative stereotypical publicity would die of diabetes.

Poetic graffiti would rage war against keeping fake mentalities And brothas would no longer be controlled even if it meant dying like Morgan in Glory Ignorance would be starvation Power would make my people hungry Knowledge laced with wisdom would be our salvation

Black men would no longer hate themselves And once more have chocolate and caramel cravings Young girls named Shanique and Ebony Would once more be queens Instead of cheap video whores

Poor ghetto mothers would no longer have to pray to the Lord everyday for the rent and Newt Gingrich complexion in satirical irony would some how mysteriously switch Rush Limbaugh would hold his show in every ghetto and borough and would be stoned lynched and bricked

And none of my brothas would reach the crossroad before they are sixteen years old And niggas would no longer be niggas or bootlicking negroes and reclaim their throne as great and mighty Pharaohs and love their queens and never dare call them hoes Black people as a whole would no longer need perms and combs because our naturally nappy hair would also represent beauty leaving straight and curly haired children to settle with their own westernized mediocrity

How sweet it would be if I sang to America like Langston and We Shall Overcome would no longer be sung and replaced with We Have Overcame

While mountains of inequality would be broken down into plains and my slave name will be changed and be spoken in Kiswahali slang to mean something with significance like One Who Breaks Chains or Great and Mighty Panther

Maybe then I will be able to kill the viruses that are killing me softly like cancer My people’s souls will ignite like timber and the roots of my past will flow with illustrious colors like Autumn in September always remembering those who paved our way And if we must die let us die like Claude McKay

How sweet it will be if my people took flight for all eternity and the racial gravity in this country would no longer remain or even exist How sweet it truly will be when this poetic cipher is renamed How Sweet It Is

By Gary Robinson

The Beat of The Drum

As does the morning’s dew, So does pain. Covering the precious earth, Disguised as an angel of light. Deception... It’s illusion. It’s reign. Silencing the drum.

Where there are Trees of life Fruits of good and evil Wise men and fools alike, Search for truth. Freedom. A quest for fire. A fight to control the light. Does it not hover? And still... Still... No sound.

Customary. Traditional. Justification. Rationalization of sin. I beseech you my fellow men. What is now,
Was then.
The eating of flesh.
Burying the dead
In holy temples.
Consider?...
How the sweet sound of a bird-
Can be heard
From a cage-
Far...
Yes, far
From its place
In the rising of the sun.
And still...
And still no sound.
Still...
Still no beat of the drum.

Liberal democracy,
Hypocrisy.
We have all been deceived.
We all have!
Each and everyone!
What have we done?!?
Become comfortable
Within our destruction?
Our humiliation?
Our captivity?
Accepting deception?
And accepting...

The silencing of the beat
Of the drum.

By W.J. Daniel II

I Still Remain
Royalty runs fluidly in my being
Even though I've been enslaved
I still remain a Queen

My breast are still swollen with the milk
that fed civilization
My womb still remembers the pain
Of bringing the world its Kings
I still remain your mother

I have survived the Middle Passage
My back has withstood slavery's lashes
I have been preyed upon and laid upon
By my enemies extremities
And still I remain strong

I have been married to be widowed
And freed to be captured
I have been loved with hate
And still I remain sane

By Chanelle R. Cox

Black United Students

Stacey McMillan
President

Traci Easley
Vice President

Nicolette Warren
Executive Secretary

James Hicks
Political Affairs & Grievances

Jamie Carmichael
Afrikan Affairs

Lakisha McCamey
Community Affairs

Kenya McKinnie
Public Relations

Wayne Tompkins
Academic Affairs

Kenn Moultrie
Treasurer

Purpose Statement
We dedicate ourselves to the re-involvement of our Afrikan community in the struggle to rediscover our past.
IN MY OPINION...

Role Models

I'm quite sure if we tried, we could think of many people that would fit the criteria, for what many would consider a "good role model." By the same token, we could also compose a list of people, that many certainly would not deem as good role models. As your scholarly minds can probably deduce, there would be names of prominent people on both lists. My question is who thought of this role model stuff to begin with?

I am of the persuasion that if the person does not directly shape our lives, how can we consider them anything. The prominent names that we would have come up with on the good role model list are still mere humans. (Even if they fit your perspective criteria.) I'm quite sure in the past two years, many so-called role models have fallen like snow in the winter. With the lust for scandal in our society, our "whore hopping" media makes sure that you and your story will be on the news before you can get dressed.

Certainly, one must realize that role model traits do exist within people in our society. The problem that I have with the term role model is simple. Have you noticed America's fixation with labeling certain things? Some scholars have done this with the very slang that blacks speak? Although every culture has certain words that they use in their social setting, of course the slang of blacks must be labeled EBONICS!!

The same has taken place with the word role model. Terms such as role model and ebonics are labels, man-made definitions (usually generalizations), which try to define a phenomenon in society. As labels are snatched as quickly as they are handed out, it seems to me that whoever said that actions speak louder than words have at least put us in touch with the preferred credentials of a role model.

Actions - If actions speak louder than words, the people that have actively shaped who we are as people, have incorporated some of who they are into who we've become. This is why we should give props to the most under paid profession in the history of the United States of America. It would shock me if most of the people reading this article, don't remember a past elementary school teacher that has touched their life. Elementary school teachers are involved with children at the most impressionable ages.

Obviously, good parents make the entire role model topic obsolete. If children are taught right from wrong from the beginning and are punished for their wrongs, the right seems much more right than wrong. The love generated from father and mother to son or daughter is an example which speaks visible volumes. By the same token, the absence of love from parents has visible repercussions as well.

There are many that would deem Jesus Christ as their role model. Anyone who incorporates religion into their everyday life can make that claim. The purpose of religion, (no matter whom you worship), is to provide a foundation and format to bring one closer to God. Many have made the claim that religion and the process of worship are to make one like God. If you are going to find one that is worthy of mimicking, it should be the God you worship daily.

Self - Whether you read this article and find it appealing or garbage, the fact remains that we are responsible for our own actions. If you show me someone that feels that the rearing of children has anything to do with what someone does on television, a vulgar tape, or anything that shouldn't be responsible for the shaping of character, then I can show you a parent whose grade warrants an incomplete. Parents must resume the responsibility of raising kids, instead of bowing down to excuses. Our children are only an extension of who we are. A child can be deviant, and unruly by his/her own wishes, which is a pertinent problem. However, with that being said, I must end this article with a cliche from my Granny: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

Joseph Knight
Staff Writer
E-MAIL

Black/White, Asian/White Dating Disparities

Dear Readers,

First of all, there is a huge disparity in Asian/white dating. MANY MORE white male/Asian female couples exist, relative to Asian male/white female couples. The same disparity exists, even in greater numbers, with black men and white women. 94 percent of black/white couples involve a black man and a white woman. It is important to note that approximately 3.5 percent of the U.S. population is Asian. About 12.7 percent of the population is African. I'm not opposed to interracial dating, however, there are some issues.

Black women and Asian men (and to a lesser extent, white men) are getting the “short end of the stick”, from a dating perspective. Why? Trust me to tell you why. The problem lies with black women. They are not perceived as being feminine and attractive (by the western world’s standards) by a majority of males. Many perceive them as being manly, with characteristics such as a deep voice, short hair, a lot of body hair, baggy clothes, and a lack of sexiness and flirtatiousness. It’s the nature of a man to consider overall attractiveness when choosing a date, and looks are a great part of this. This has compelled many black men to look for white women to date.

Consequently, many black males, which comprise a significant segment of the population, date white women. This leaves white males with no choice. Many, in an effort to relieve their loneliness, date Asian females. This leaves Asian males with the “short end of the stick” along with black females. Due to the fact that the African population is much greater than the Asian population, white males are also left out.

Black females have the highest rate of singularity of any ethnic/gender group in our country, and it’s precisely due to their lack of softness and femininity both in personality and appearance. This isn’t a racist, mean comment. It’s one meant to educate and help lonely people.

The solution? Many would fret at that word, “solution.” I think interracial dating is a problem needing to be solved. I feel that there are too many lonely people out there who need a partner and should have one. Black women have to shed their macho, masculine and unattractive character and appearance. This will compel black men to actually ENJOY dating black women, which will mean more Asian women for Asian men. There will be many less lonely people in the world and it all stems from the masculinity of the black female.

Sorry, I know I’ll offend some, but in my heart I know I’m not a racist, and it’s for the better.

Jonathon
(P.S. I’m a white male, with a white girlfriend!)

RESPONSE.

Jonathon,

I appreciate your honesty and your opinion. I am a black woman and I’m not the least bit offended. I attribute your perspective to a lack of exposure. I realize that only age, maturity and an introduction to what YOU’VE been missing out on will change that. I will only entertain your ignorance for a moment, but feel free to reply and we’ll keep the dialogue going!

I live in Washington D.C. and I have never had a problem finding a man! What “short stick” are you talking about! Don’t fool yourself into thinking that white men aren’t attracted to us just because you aren’t. Black men love us; Asian men are fascinated by our mystery; African men admire our strength, intellect, and confidence; Latin men adore our curves, sensuality, and rhythm; Italian men savor our style and the variety in our shades; Brits enjoy our quick wit and zest for life; Australians love our good conversation and love for good beer and I could go on and on! It’s only “American” men that admire us secretly. You watch us at work, at school, in the street and you want to get to know us, but your shame won’t allow it. You too are fascinated by the mystic. You like the way our brown skin glints against your pale white skin - when we shake your hand, that is! Short hair is sexy and deep voices are sensual. Ask your granddad! Black women, my dear are known nurturers. While your mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmas sat and drank tea, we were feeding you, teaching you. We raised you! But there’s no need to get philosophical on you. Let’s keep it to the here and now!

My advice to you dear is to stop watching Jenny Jones, Cops, and Ricky Lake. The sistahs that you see on TV, are not representative of the masses. The sistahs in my circle wouldn’t know a pair of baggy jeans if they slapped them in the face. Charm and flirt are our middle names. Validate your research with some exposure. Take off your blinders and feed your ignorance. There’s an entire world that YOU are missing out on!

Peace and Blessings,

Tonya
**Who Runs The Stater Anyway?**

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We're committed to the free flow of news, ideas and information.
1970 brought about a “NEW ERA” of BUS. (68) Under the presidential leadership of former Black Watch editor and chair of the Defense Institution, Erwind Blount, BUS actualized the philosophy of Black Nationalism and embraced the idea of REVOLUTION! Despite many of the advancements that BUS had made during the previous year, Blount felt that:

...we don’t as of yet have an atmosphere conducive to the survival of Black students on this campus. Certain things will and must be done to change this racist slavery atmosphere to be relevant and sympathetic to Black people’s survival... the white boys controlling this campus don’t give a damn about the Black student population. (69)

Prior to this time, BUS had been at the forefront of building KSU’s black community, but its efforts were not done in the name of Black Nationalism. Blount was the first BUS leader to openly embrace this philosophy, which according to Malcolm X, who Blount greatly admired, was the idea that blacks needed their own nation in order to properly ensure their survival as a people. (70) Blount was also the first BUS leader to openly accept a militant ideology towards the black liberation struggle. The REVOLUTION, as he had amended to the BUS Constitution, entailed “firing or if need be killing of all racist deans, teachers, professors, coaches, or university president’s.” (71)

This new organizational consciousness was dedicated to nation building. In every issue of the Black Watch there was a section entitled the “Goal of BUS”— which remained unchanged in the newspaper for several years. Here is where BUS first introduced and reinforced its philosophy towards liberation: “The Goal of BUS as dictated by the Revolutionary Spirit of Black Generations through the ages, is Freedom and Liberation for Black people in America and abroad.” (74) According to this article, there were
three ways in which BUS, under Blount, would attempt to do this:

1. Nationalism—which is nation building. We believe Malcolm X, who teaches us, that if you are afraid of Nationalism you are afraid of Freedom. We further believe that the skills we can learn from this white institution, in which are of value, should be taken back to the Black Community to help Build it.” (75)

2. Black Student Mental and Physical Survival—in America and abroad. The Black mind must be protected and preserved for the challenges which lay ahead in the Revolution. On the white college campus and all other white education institutions, grade school, elementary, nursery, junior and senior high, we know that these institutions represent no more than prisons and death chambers to the maturing Black mind, (76)

3. Finally, the organization was inserted to make sure no avenue toward freedom is blocked. It reads as follows: If we, through our own lack of insight, have forgotten or failed to think of a process or idea which would lead to our people’s freedom quicker, than we say ‘freedom and liberation through ANY MEANS NECESSARY!’ (77)

Blount trained and surrounded himself with other BUS leaders loyal to these ideas. Some of these young men, who were the core of the BUS Executive Board, included: Charles Eberhardt (the Vice President), Rudolph Perry, Marcus May, Silas Ashley, and Duane Cox. These young soldiers remained with BUS for several years, so Blount left a philosophical legacy that lasted long after he was out of office.

Everyone knew where BUS stood as an organization. Blount’s leadership did not change the direction or purpose of BUS from the two previous years. In fact, he did the exact opposite by further developing the organization’s political identity, which under him was rooted in the philosophy of Black Nationalism and militancy. BUS’ acceptance of a specific philosophy and ideology toward liberation may have been the most important strategic move the organization ever made. Any calls for collective action, protest, or moves against the obstacles that prohibited BUS from achieving its goals were justified and explained through the “Goal of BUS”. This small article, which was published over and over again, gave insight and explanation into the rationale underlining BUS’ social movement.

The NEW ERA quickly warned BUS members to “get themselves together, for some dramatic political moves” would soon be made. (79) In early April, Blount individually met with President White, Vice President Matson, and the Student Affairs Council—all on different occasions. Before each group he presented a list of three universal grievances, and others that varied:

1. The three constant demands were for an enrollment of 5,000 black students at KSU by the fall of 1970, new and better space for the Black Cultural Center, and more and strictly black faculty for the Institute of African American Affairs.

2. Before President White, he also asked that a building be named for a black man, that better financial assistance be provided black students, and that a space be provided BUS in the new University Center.

3. Before Vice President Matson, he asked that the university police be disarmed.

4. And before the Student Affairs council, he demanded that President White resign. (80)

President White responded to Blount in writing a week later on April 17th. His letter was widely distributed to other university officials and faculty. In it, he declared that:

You are to be commended for your presentation of concerns within the established University channels of communications. By doing so you permit objective review of existing programs and provide a credible forum for student expression. Indeed, any other approach could well have worked against the very goals we all seek. It is understandable that members of our black community frequently feel that they live and work in an alien atmosphere. We regret that feeling. The efforts and energies of many have been directed at making all mem-

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bers of the University community feel equally accepted and at home, and it is toward this goal of complete integration that our programs are hopefully directed. (81)

One week later, on April 24th, the BUS Executive Board, in unified support of Blount, “set the matter straight” in an editorial to the Stater. (82) The letter addressed their disapproval with President White by going public with their meeting. It also discussed the “lies that have been told and what ridiculous statements were made.” (83) This fiery, but rational, letter completely changed BUS’ dialogue-centered approach to addressing its grievances:

The true aims of the university are being seen at this very moment. The answer is hard to arrive at, for we tried to enter into rational negotiations only to have our attempts undone by premature publicity. Is this the way to further communication, or is it a way to elicit direct confrontation? We of BUS are bigger than that and hip enough not to attack the university and undo what little we have by having our membership excluded from campus. The question we would like to ask is, How long can we afford to wait for a total redress of our grievances? We suggest that we will not wait too long. (84)

BUS wasn’t bluffing. On May 27th, three days after its response was published, 20 black males dressed in all-black with afros and pins symbolizing unity, carried two Black Nationalist flags across campus in staging a silent “military-like” formation march. The demonstration was charted “from the old Ward House, past the Military Science Buildings and the Union, through the police station to the front of the Administration Building.” (85) This peaceful, but extremely political exercise, was organized in support of the issues raised during the meetings and letters exchanged between BUS and the administration. The marchers took pictures and stood quietly upon arrival to the executive university offices. (86) They then marched off, this time chanting fight songs and spirituals. In returning to the Kuumba House, the group spotted the helicopter of Republican gubernatorial candidate Roger Cloud, who was appearing at an on-campus campaign rally in support of his election. In a climactic end to the protest, BUS began, “Marching again in formation, the marchers went down to the field and marched past the assembled cars and people twice, then went around the helicopter once before returning to the Ward House.” (87)

The tension was mounting at KSU. SDS had taken over downtown Kent and other university buildings in numerous anti-war protests. In front of 300 students, a group of history students symbolically buried the U.S. Constitution in an exercise of freedom. And few days earlier at the Ohio State University, black students took over several administration buildings and were forcefully removed without any of their 18 demands being heard. A week later some of them spoke at a BUS rally on front campus. There were literally thousands of influences and movements gaining intensity throughout the country, not to mention this extremely political period at KSU. But, the most powerful and pro-active social movements were the overall massive anti-war demonstrations, and BUS’ strength and determination. Everything was coming to head, it was only a matter of time before this fiery environment would erupt into violence.

On Friday, May 1st, BUS held a rally on front campus that involved 300 students. It’s reported that only 50 were black. At this time, there is no documentation as to why so few Blacks participated. (91) In the keynote address, Blount announced that BUS was “through talking” with the administration since they had tried dialogue with them and were “refused”. (92) He then stated that some form of action would be taken, but that “we’re not walking off this time, but nobody’s going to walk on.” (93) Other BUS leaders spoke at the rally including, Charles Eberhardt, who declared that the National Guard “was on its way to Kent, if it isn’t here already.” (94) Later that night, a riot broke out in downtown Kent concerning President Nixon’s decision to send U.S. troops into Cambodia. The National Guard had indeed arrived at Kent in order to calm the anti-war protest. This “just-in-case” decision backfired as the military presence only perpetuated more tension.

On Sunday, May 3rd, BUS’ business continued as usual at its regular meeting. Blount, like others felt that the tension surrounding the weekend had little to do with BUS, so he informed the few members present to “stay out of the action and to advise all black student to remain aloof from what was happening.” (96)

The next day, Monday, May 4th,
was the day in which all hell broke loose at KSU. Four people were killed as the National Guard opened fire on the peacefully protesting students. The University closed for the remainder of the semester. Over the summer, a task force called “the Commission on Kent State University Violence” found BUS to be a “contributor” to the May 4th tragedy because of its May 1st rally. (97) This was obviously not founded. Dean Wilson emphatically defended black students:

... In the wake of the apparent witch-hunting that is occurring and in the wake of attempts to involve Black students, I swear that to the best of my knowledge, the Black students at Kent State University were detached from the events and not even highly concerned about the ‘white violence’ that some white folks might want to disown. (98)

Following this, a task force on Black Student Concerns was implemented to address the issues that BUS had raised before May 4th. The committee, which was made of both black and white students and administrators, resolved in a June 15th memo to the Commission to Implement a Commitment to Non-Violence, that:

We consider the concerns of black students to be of urgent priority. In order to minimize the prospects of violence generated by a lack of positive response to black student concerns, we recommend the following:

1. Presidential conferences with the Black United Students should be resumed. President White should initiate the conferences as soon as possible.

2. Positive and vigorous steps should be taken in these conferences to clearly state the high priority of Black student concerns and should facilitate Black student development and reduce Black student frustration.

The above recommendations are made because the Black students, through the officers of the Black United Students, are their own best spokesmen... and because the Black United Students feel the necessity for continuing these negotiations.(99)

But in a memo to Blount, who for tactical purposes refused to join the committee, the administrators expressed that their recommendations, “might not be seen by BUS as truly representative of the position of black students.” (100) Then, two days later on June 20th, “the proposed new site for the Black Cultural Center, an old house on Rhodes Road that was scheduled for refurbishment, was set on fire.” (101) The following night, Blount and Rudolph Perry, were arrested for trespassing on University property. A police search found them in possession of “two gallon cans of oil, some rags, and a flare. The relationship of the oil, rags, and flare to the fire, however, could not be determined; therefore, Mr. Blount and Mr. Perry were arrested only for trespassing.” (102) Their student conduct date was scheduled for July 20th.

Blount and Perry took advantage of the media hype surrounding the case in hopes to make advances for BUS. In the Record-Courier, Blount announced that, “We had the cans of oil because Rudy works in a garage. The cans were not open.” (103) And that, in his opinion, the University police department was “holding” them for “political reasons” because of President White. He wants to open the university with an attitude of non-violence.” (104) The Akron Beacon Journal published quotes from Blount’s testimony at a “legislative sub-committee” on campus “unrest”. (107) He said that the “sky is the limit” for civil disobedience if university’s don’t respond to needs of black students, but that BUS at KSU “won’t be responsible for any violence.” (108) In another article in the Beacon Journal which focused specifically on BUS, Blount said that, “If black brothers and sisters come back to school this fall and see nothing has changed, there is going to be trouble and BUS won’t be responsible.” (109) He then stated that the Kuumba House, which was 110 years old, was “totally inadequate” for the Black Cultural Center. (110)

Blount and Perry were found guilty of trespassing. They testified that they had stopped at the Rhodes House to “urinate” before they returned to Cleveland. (111) The judge of the municipal court said that, “It seems inconceivable to the court that the choice of location was purely accidental, or an emergency choice, both defendants being cognizant of the location and the proposed use of the building.” (112) On August 5th, Dean Wilson ordered an inspection of the Kuumba House at Blount’s request who had mentioned that the National Guard “had been in the house during their occupancy of the campus.” (113) It had been locked up for the summer, and off limits to students, much like the Rhodes House, so it was virtually impossible to get inside the house without using force. They found that:

The place is a mess. Someone evidently broke in and spread the supplies all over, knocked over chairs, etc. food was left in the cupboards, the refrigerator was on high freeze and the ice was pushing the freezer door apart. The smell of decay permeates the place. I’m sure students could not be using it this summer. (114)

They also discovered that:

1. Pictures of Martin Luther King and Stokely Carmichael were torn down and crumpled, but pictures of Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther Party leaders, were left untouched.

2. Reserve Officer Training magazines from KSU’s Army ROTC Office were carefully arranged, fanned out like a handful of cards on the floor in the living room, just in front of an upturned couch.
3. Many of the chairs and papers appeared to be carefully dis-arranged.

On August 12th, a handful of BUS Executive Board members, including Blount, approached the Human Relations Center with two proposals for the Black Cultural Center. They wanted to: 1. Paint the Kuumba House red, black, and green, the colors of the Black Nationalist flag. And, 2. Hire a black female alumnus of KSU who had been working in black education in Washington, D.C.. They wanted her to become the new Director of the Center. (116) This came as a shock because BUS leaders had always wanted to move out of the Kuumba House since they claimed it was “inadequate”. The students were then informed that “there was a good possibility that the house would be down within the next two weeks,” in order to make room for the Business Administration Building. (117)

The BUS leaders were infuriated! They had finally agreed upon a cultural philosophy for the foundation of the Center. BUS was preparing to establish autonomous control of the Center since it was a creation of black students. They immediately went to the Kuumba House, then stormed into President White’s office and demanded to see him. They were so angry that they were “profane in the presence of Dr. White’s secretary and told her that if she didn’t like it she could put cotton in her ears.” (118) The students couldn’t meet with President White for he had “other obligations”, but they did schedule an emergency meeting for the next day. (119)

Black student leaders felt that the purpose of the dialogue was to discuss the “continuation of space for BUS to continue their programming. They demanded that a continuation of space be guaranteed.” (121) The meeting was called to get the answer to one question: “Would immediate space and acceptable space be immediately available to BUS when they have to vacate the Kuumba House?” (122) President White “could not and would not” assure the continuation of the space at this meeting because he had to secure some information on the time table associated with the College of Business Administration Building and the availability of other space.” (123)

This only further agitated the BUS leaders. They refused to vacate the Kuumba House until they knew where, and how adequate, their new space would be in fulfilling their organization’s needs. They then proceeded to curse President White out calling him every four letter word under the sun! It is not documented, it’s been reported that Blount called White a “racist motherfucker” to his face because he refused to listen to the barrage of attacks! The students then followed White into the “main hall of the administration building, and there in front of thirty to forty people continued to pour out obscenities and to verbally abuse him.” (124)

The students then left the building and left the meeting to Smith, who presented a proposal on behalf of black students and faculty. President White later resumed to the meeting after he had obtained an update on the situation. He then assured BUS the “continuity of the space for programming.” (125)

In the days following the student’s disrespectful behavior, Dean Wilson organized an administrative campaign against those involved in the confrontation. He, along with Thigpen, and four other black male administrators, none of whom were involved with the IAAA, drafted a memo explaining how “something ought to be done” in response to the BUS leaders course of action. (126) This letter, dated August 22nd, is an important perception of BUS under Blount, especially from an administrative perspective. Incidentally, this memo was widely distributed to area newspapers including Akron and Cleveland. It was also sent to administrators, faculty, and student organizations.

These six black administrators basically called for Blount’s removal from office as the President of BUS since one of the main responsibilities of this position was to serve as the sole spokesperson of the organization. Soon after this letter was published and distributed, Blount was no longer the President of BUS. There is no documented evidence of a BUS election around this time, nor is there any recorded information concerning Blount being ousted from the organization, which was highly unlikely. There’s also no evidence that he resigned, which seems equally unlikely. But, sometime, in the few remaining weeks before the beginning of the Fall semester, Charles Eberhardt became the new President of BUS.

The first order of business for BUS under Eberhardt was to form an agenda that focused on building a unified black student community. But, as we all know, in America, without money one cannot build anything. BUS had no bank account and no income. The organization was financially dependent of KSU for everything; the implications of this realization were monumental. How could BUS claim to be a Black Nationalist group when it depended on the university power structure to financially support it?

Beginning from the understanding that most black students “can’t relate to the white university,” BUS demanded the autonomous control of all black student activity fees in order to provide programming conducive to the black experience at KSU. (128) The University was reflective of the mainstream White American experience, thus the Black American cultural experience was largely ignored.

In December, Eberhardt delivered two powerful actualizing statements when he declared that BUS “is the student government for Black students, not Student Senate!” (129) He then tore the roof off by saying, “Let it be known, we will no longer be prostitutes for this racist institution!” (130) BUS had drawn the race lines at KSU. The organization was preparing to build a unified community within the university. The demand for $40,000 was based on the fact that there were close to 800 black students enrolled at KSU who each paid $41 in fees. (131) Normally, after students had paid this money, it was then handed over to...
Student Government which was responsible for allocating programming funds. Since BUS felt that it was the “student government” for blacks, the organization demanded this money so that it could set up its own allocations process for black student groups.

While the administration and Student Government were busy dealing with the controversy surrounding the demand, the core leadership of BUS was gathering support for its cause. Blount and May were arrested and tried by a KSU hearing board officer for allegedly defacing university property. They were supposedly seen writing on the east side of Merrill Hall with black chalk by a KSU police officer who “found 27 pieces of chalk on Blount and 34 pieces on May.” (132) The patrolman testified that the two were leaving messages in support of BUS receiving $40,000. Due to a lack of evidence, both of the young men were acquitted. Also around this time, someone “put a bomb outside the Kuumba House”. (133) A police investigation found no suspects and left many unanswered questions. There was no significant damage to the house, but in a Stater editorial BUS leaders asked:

Could it have been a white radical? Of course not. Not with all the other targets available, police stations, administration buildings etc. Maybe the black students blew it up themselves to create an issue to unify around. But this couldn’t be true since BUS leadership had just decided to utilize the house despite its shortcomings and make the best of it until something more adequate was obtained.

Despite the fact that there have been several bomb threats, this is the only one that has gone off. I wonder why? And then after the bomb went off it took police over five hours to find where the explosion had taken place. (The house is less than 300 yards from the police station.) How about that?” (134)

BUS occupied the Kuumba House until the end of 1971 when it was demolished to make room for the present-day Business Administration Building. There is no documented information, but according to some past BUS leaders, several students chained themselves inside the house and refused to leave for days in order to keep the home at the center of KSU’s black community! The Center then moved into Rockwell Hall and finally into Oscar Ritchie Hall.

The university had no intentions of giving BUS $40,000. If BUS was successful at becoming autonomous the administration would have no checks and balances on the organization. Thus, BUS would become an even stronger threat as it could challenge KSU’s due process whenever and however it pleased.

The university claimed to support the ideals of Cultural Integration, not BUS’ Black Nationalist agenda, hence the demand was unanimously rejected by both the Student Activities Budget Committee and the Student Affairs Council. The request never went through the traditional allocation process, although it is not known if BUS submitted its proposal to be heard by Student Government. The university’s concern with BUS’ demand can best be summed up by Dr. David Ambler, Vice-President of Student Affairs:

In considering the demand we must also consider what kind of community we would create here at Kent by granting the demand... Would Kent consist of a Black community and a White community? Would the demand help integration or hinder its progress? (136)

The $40,000 demand was the climax of what was probably the most politically incorrect, revolutionary, in-your-face, year-long BUS struggle in the history of the organization! Under Erwind Blount, the leaders of the “NEW ERA”, laid the philosophical foundation that guided BUS for nearly a decade.
Despite the rejection of its $40,000 demand, BUS was extremely positive toward its efforts. The Black Nationalist agenda and militant ideology the organization put forth instilled a sense of purpose and direction among black students like never before at KSU.

References:

1. Newmam, pg. 39.
2. Wilson, pg. 41.
4. Wilson, pg. 43.
5. Wilson, pg. 44.
6. Wilson, pg. 45.
7. Wilson, pg. 46.
8. Black Watch, pg. 47.
10. Wilson, pg. 49.
12. Wilson, pg. 51.
13. Wilson, pg. 52.
14. Wilson, pg. 53.
15. Wilson, pg. 54.
16. Wilson, pg. 55.
17. Wilson, pg. 56.
18. Wilson, pg. 57.
19. Wilson, pg. 58.
20. Wilson, pg. 59.
21. Wilson, pg. 60.
22. Wilson, pg. 61.
23. Wilson, pg. 62.
24. Wilson, pg. 63.
25. Wilson, pg. 64.
26. Wilson, pg. 65.
27. Wilson, pg. 66.
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32. Wilson, pg. 71.
33. Wilson, pg. 72.
34. Wilson, pg. 73.
35. Wilson, pg. 74.
36. Wilson, pg. 75.
37. Wilson, pg. 76.
38. Wilson, pg. 77.
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40. Wilson, pg. 79.
41. Wilson, pg. 80.
42. Wilson, pg. 81.
43. Wilson, pg. 82.
44. Wilson, pg. 83.
45. Wilson, pg. 84.
46. Wilson, pg. 85.
47. Wilson, pg. 86.
48. Wilson, pg. 87.
49. Wilson, pg. 88.
50. Wilson, pg. 89.
51. Wilson, pg. 90.
52. Wilson, pg. 91.
53. Wilson, pg. 92.
54. Wilson, pg. 93.
55. Wilson, pg. 94.
56. Wilson, pg. 95.
57. Wilson, pg. 96.
58. Wilson, pg. 97.
59. Wilson, pg. 98.
60. Wilson, pg. 99.

Former BUS Presidents
Rudolph Perry (standing) and Envil Blount parading for the BUS legal defense fund after having been arrested for writing on university sidewalks that BUS demands $40,000. This was after learning that BUS would not receive funding as an organization, even though its members were all paying Student Activity Fees.


Footnotes:

1. Newmam, pg. 39.
2. Wilson, pg. 41.
3. Wilson, pg. 42.
4. Wilson, pg. 43.
5. Wilson, pg. 44.
6. Wilson, pg. 45.
7. Wilson, pg. 46.
8. Wilson, pg. 47.
10. Wilson, pg. 49.
11. Wilson, pg. 50.
A SHARING OF SOULS

The Return of Harambee’s Poetry Readings
By Troy Ryan Gregorino
It’s Thursday. Studies have been set aside for now. Night has fallen. A hallway fills with a spirit of togetherness and community as a predominantly Black crowd congregates for a night out, or in a deeper sense, a night in. It’s poetry night.

Harambee, the second oldest African-centered organization at Kent State University, organizes the monthly readings held in the Malcolm X Lounge of Oscar Ritchie Hall. To the students for whom the readings are a regular source of literary enlightenment, this is something far more than just a social gathering. It is a process of revealing one’s innermost feelings before a crowd of supporters. Harambee’s poetry nights provide the campus’ most prominent outlet for Kent’s black community to engage in the sharing of poetry. To spectators and artists alike, it is clear that the outcome of this event is more than applause at the conclusion of each poem. More than just something to do on Thursday night, what happens inside the Malcolm X Lounge is an experience.

The lounge’s distinctive lime green walls, blanketed in vibrant paintings, tell some of the stories of the struggle including tributes to Malcolm, as well as a mural depicting his assassination. Permanently frozen on the walls are the stunned reactions of spectators of that fateful event. Malcolm’s face, detailed with dignity, holds a place on the wall between the images of Elijah Muhammad and Martin Luther King Jr., African queens, a clenched fist, demonstrators protesting apartheid and the silhouette of a panther. One can see Klansmen at a lynching before an ignited cross and a slave ship on the middle passage. Such painted slogans as “Keep On Up,” “Fear Not Yourself” and “Think” also adorn the walls of the lounge.

Inside the Malcolm X Lounge, which includes a small kitchen, complete with a refrigerator, a stove, cupboards and a sink, are twelve cafeteria-style tables, each surrounded by four chairs. They’re the kind of chairs reminiscent of lunch time in middle school - plastic, orange seats with metal frames. Not long after 7:30, all of the chairs are taken and the three small steps inside the doorway are occupied by a crowd of late arrivals, who sit together under the “Maximum Capacity: 128 persons” sign. A feeling of warmth, togetherness and acceptance fill the lounge as anticipation of the readings sets in.

First is a brief welcome by Pan-African Studies professor and faculty adviser to Harambee, Mwatatub Okanthah, whose creative writing class was the starting point for the poetry readings. The host wins the hushed respect of the crowd before introducing the night’s slate of readers. Then, the poetry begins. As the students who arrived early to claim a spot on the sign-up sheet begin sharing their works, the gamut of emotions is broad and deep. Such rich variety. Despite some common experiences, each poet’s message is unique. Each reader has a different story to tell. Some inspire laughter. Others force tears from the eyes of audience members at a table by the back wall. Some read quiescently from their papers at the podium; others energetically flow through their poetry from memory. From one style to another, each poet contributes to the warm atmosphere that is characteristic of the readings. Reflective of Harambee’s English translation, “pulling together,” participants in the poetry night scene express their appreciation for the legacy of togetherness that typifies the readings.

Mshindi Mkataaa, a sophomore Pan-African Studies and Pre-Med major, said she feels free to express her feelings at the Harambee readings. “If you’ve got something to say, you come out and say it,” she said. “A lot of people don’t like sensitive issues, such as racism and political issues, but here you can be comfortable enough to say what you want because you’re not the only one thinking it.”

Mkataaa said she has an appreciation for the significance of the poetry readings’ location. “Oscar Ritchie Hall has an aura of togetherness where you let your guard down and relax,” she said. “Everybody will support you no matter what you say, because everybody has a voice.”

A regular poet and crowd favorite, first-year Kent student and Education major, Kenan Bishop, said he’s been inspired by such writings as those shared at the most recent readings. He said participating in the Oscar Ritchie lounge setting is personally significant. “To me, it’s lovely to see African Americans share a depthness,” he said. “We reveal our souls in there.”

Bishop said he feeds off the energy of spectators and the other readers. “It’s like a communion of souls in there,” he said. “No matter who you are or where you’re from, you just let your soul out in there, and it fluctuates throughout the room.” Among the personal inspirations Bishop cited was his brother, sophomore Architecture major, Kurran Bishop. “The whole thing is about reality,” Kurran said. “I can learn more about my culture through my peers. I leave here with a more open spirit.”

As far Harambee itself, it has had its periods of stagnancy, but is now blossoming back into a mode of full effectiveness, according to Okanthah.

“Harambee is a student-centered group to connect, and when necessary re- connect, students to this building,” Okanthah said. “We have to reintroduce the idea that this is the house that B.U.S. built. A lot of black students don’t realize the significance of that...We’re in the process of reactivating it and formally rebuilding it as an African-centered organization,” he said.

Okanthah said he is pleased to see that students continue to be involved in the poetry readings. “This is inspiring to me because a lot of people my age underestimate you young people,” he said. “I think the significance is (that) it is an activity that students ask for,” Okanthah said. “That’s the bottom line of its success.”
We are in a struggle for liberation: liberation from the exploitative and dehumanizing system of racism, from the manipulative control of corporate society; liberation from the constructive norms of “mainstream” culture, from the synthetic myths that encourage us to fashion ourselves rashly from without (reaction) rather than from within (creation).

-Toni Cade Bambara

As long as we have been in America, we are still struggling for liberation. Why is that? Is it the system that is keeping us down? Or is it us? You will get no argument from me that this white-supremacist society has deliberately set up barriers and road blocks to prevent us from seeing the direction in which we are to go. But we have a secret weapon that has the potential to withstand whatever is thrown in the way of our destination. This weapon that can clear away the stumbling blocks and barriers, the Black family. I call it a secret weapon because we have been told that this family unit was destroyed years ago. Yet, what people fail to realize is that we as a people have the ability to rise again after we’ve been knocked down.

The Black family has always been a dynamic structural institution where the strengths and weaknesses of individuals have been used to uplift and liberate the masses. The slave trade, an inhumane tactic to separate and destroy the family, was inflicted upon our people. Sure, the family was broken, but we regrouped and formed new families. Slavery took away from black women the maternal right to care for their children and the paternal right for a man to protect his family; but we found ways to carry out these rights. Mothers and fathers would travel all night to spend a few hours with their children. Then make it back before day break. They often risked their own lives escaping so that they could get to a place where the children would be free.

This is the Black family, a communal people. Everyone in the community was family, an extended family. It was this extended family that watched, fed, and protected your children when you could not. When I was younger and stepped out of line while away from my parents, any elder who saw me could snatch me up and whoop my behind. And it was okay. Rarely do you see others caring for someone else’s child, or allowing others to chaste them when they are away.

We have lost the notion of working together as an extended family. We as a people use to:

Dance, in step, on the beat; together. But now we stumble through this diseased ridden nightmare called an “American Dream.”

-Last Poets

It is this “American Dream” full of individualism, no-limit competition, and materialism that has caused a crisis within the Black family. It is no longer we. It is I; we’ve stopped helping one another succeed once we’ve “made it.” No longer is the act of giving fulfilling.

Thoughts are preoccupied with how much money I will make. It is this mode of thinking that has caused us to bear witness to unnecessary poverty and unintentional child neglect. It is this way of thinking that resulted in our communities being infested with crime, drugs, and gangs. It seems so overwhelming because it wasn’t always like this.

We have to give our children alternatives and not be so tolerant of their behavior because they may have been “dealt an unfair card.” So what! We as their family have the ability to level the playing field so that they won’t feel that they have to be in gangs for protection or to belong; nor do they have to sell drugs and steal to provide for themselves or their family. The community (family) has to be the one to stand up and say NO MORE. Our children’s hearts and minds are being overwhelmed with fear and despair, and it doesn’t have to be. Psalm 61:7 says ‘...when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” They are crying out to the family so that we may lead them to the “rock.” A rock that will stand, like the tree planted by the river. Where its roots are so far down that it may bend but never break. It always pulls itself back up.

The family has to be the teacher of our children, the very first teachers.

My great-grandmama told my grandmama the part she lived through that my grandmama didn’t live through and my grandmama told my mama what they both lived through and my mama told me
what they all lived through and we were suppose to pass it down like that from generation to generation so we'd never forget.

-Gayle Jones

We cannot rely on a Eurocentric educational system to educate our children about their culture, values, and traditions; only we know what it is that our children should know.

We are in a crisis that is affecting our families, leaving our children to fend for themselves. How much longer must the suffering continue before the family stands up and accepts the responsibility that has been given, to set us free. It is the Black family that is going to lead us to liberation, up from the depths of poverty, from the pits of despair, and from the ties that bind us to this oppressive Nation.

Medical Services

Medical Services offers a broad range of services. Health education programs and services are offered through the Office of Student Health Promotion at 672-2320. Kent State Ambulance offers emergency service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (during the academic year), on campus CALL 911, off campus but within the city limits, CALL 672-2212.

DeWeese Health Center
Eastway Drive

Psychological Services

Psychological Services provides a wide variety of services to the students. Whether the student has concerns about personal issues, managing the stresses of class work and tests, or living more comfortably with students in a class or residence hall, Psychological Services provides high quality personalized service.
More evident today than ever before, African Americans have lost the drive necessary to push, move forward and achieve. Thirty years ago, African Americans made great strides socially and politically. In fact, our predecessors established the groundwork for the foundation on which we now stand. The question that plagues many of today's intellectual elite, why has the progress of African Americans stopped? The answers are many and intricate. Here I will identify three mental states that have put the brakes on the momentum of African American progress; they are complacency, lack of vision and the victim mentality. These mental states lead to a defeatist attitude that can cripple the mind and destroy one's drive to succeed.

The Complacency Disease

Years of research and investigation have shown that complacency will lessen the energy level of an individual as well as the will of an individual to achieve. Complacency is a disease that has crippled many people, leaving communities and even nations vulnerable. It has two deadly components:

Laziness - Who ever thought that laziness could affect your growth? Evidence suggests that many do not. In fact, most people think growth comes naturally, that not much effort is required of the individual. Well, if the growth is physical in nature, this may be true. However, the growth that enables one to reach new horizons and has the ability to change the world involves growth of a mental capacity. The truth is that laziness and mental growth are opposites that cannot coexist in the same body. For laziness is more than not wanting to move your body, but also the refusal to move your mind.

Freedom from Laziness - The way to beat laziness is through frequent exercise of the mind. Read, listen, and explore. Become an active participant in the game of life. Find something that interests you and develop that pursuit. No matter how trivial the interest may seem, your mastery of a particular subject or activity will add to the diversity of your existence as well as that of your community.

Settling for Less - The second element of a complacent mind is the theory and reality of settling for less. Settling is a mental phenomenon. There is nothing wrong with being satisfied. In fact, it is often a state that succeeds feelings of accomplishment. However, a problem arises when the state of one's existence is obviously negative, unproductive or even destructive, yet there is no motivation to change. Examples of this behavior can be found in our communities. Consider a person on crack. To overcome the addiction, he/she must first acknowledge the unfavorable conditions in their life, especially before the first hit was taken. Take a man or woman in an unhappy relationship. Resolution must be preceded by the recognition of the negativity that existed when communication started breaking down and arguing became common practice.

In certain circumstances, some believe that it is acceptable, even proper, to remain in the counterproductive situations. For instance, Tupac Shakur and many other rappers pride themselves on "staying true" to the place from which they came. This may mean continuing to live in the same place or living the same life style even after they have made enough money to improve their situations. Those who continue to live in negativity are settling for less and are feeding the complacency disease.

Demanding More - In order to elevate our performance, we must first elevate our thoughts. In order to elevate our thoughts we must rid ourselves of the negativity that surrounds us. To stop settling for less, we simply have to demand more. Demand more from our schools, demand more from our neighborhoods, but more importantly, demand more from ourselves.

Everyday that is spent without growth is a day spent in complacency. Without exercising our minds or demanding more out from our lives, we become victims of the complacen-
cy disease and assist the manifestation of the defeatist attitude.

Lack of Vision
People lacking vision are also without sight. It sounds simple, but recognition of this truth is more difficult. Many of us can’t see past our present situation. Without the vision to assess or derive possibilities and expectations for the future, we are stuck with living within the limited prospects of today. For example, some social behavioral scientists have determined that drug dealers and users, in addition to lacking self-pride and morals, lack vision of the future or long term. Poisoning the community, while jeopardizing one’s health and well being, in an effort to make quick money, is a prime example of not looking at the long term.

Look to Tomorrow - With out vision there can be no progress or accomplishment. Our present is comprised of realities that were envisioned in previous years. We must continue to stretch our imagination and expect the unexpected. If we consciously position ourselves for greatness, we will be guided towards our desires and goals.

The Victim Mentality
From our every day conversations, it has become apparent that many people, but specifically African Americans, have over indulged themselves in the victim mentality. Whether jobs have become scarce, advancements in employment have not been available or evaluations are not what we expected, often the result is that people feel victimized. The victim’s arguments are very common. “My professor gave me a D”, “My supervisor did not promote me”, and “There are no jobs available”. A common symptom of the victim mentality is the feeling that we as a people have been “shorted”; that we are entitled to something and have been “played.” What causes these feelings of victimization and how can we adjust our mentality to view the world through the eyes of opportunist instead of looking from the eyes of a victim?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 1996, a victim is a person or thing injured or destroyed. Instead of counting our blessings, we often preoccupy our thoughts with feelings of victimization and focusing on negativity. If we look to current events, examples of extreme destruction and grief are clear. The men and women in Georgia who suffered from a storm that destroyed their homes, killing thirteen people on March 21, 1998. Another example is the family who has to deal with the fact that their son, a Shaw High School athlete, died abruptly in the middle of a basketball game. Though these people have suffered extreme losses, they have not lost their spirit, hope and courage. They are living examples that we don’t have to allow our circumstances to weigh us down. We don’t have to become victims mentally. You, as an individual, have the power to determine the ultimate outcome of any given situation. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for an able bodied person to use the word victim or develop a defeatist attitude when blessings flow every day.

The End of the Victim - Instead of feeling like a victim, stop the cycle and change gears. Realize that we can alter any situation through hard work and persistence. When we except being a victim, we place the blame on others, which in turn limits our mental and physical capacity to develop a means of overcoming the challenges that we encounter. It is necessary that we take responsibility for improving our conditions.

How can a person, community or race of people fail? I would argue that the development of the defeatist attitude would improve the chances of such an occurrence. Complacency, lack of vision and the victim mentality are all symptoms that indicate the presence of a defeatist disposition. Until we rid ourselves of these elements, this attitude will stifle our growth, rate of success and momentum for positive change. You don’t turn your vehicle off when you ride upon a stop sign. Slowly come to a halt. Assess the situation by looking at your surroundings. Cautiously place your foot on the gas and slowly proceed forward. The same is true with life. Approach each challenge with an open mind. View every alternative taking into account the benefits and consequences of your action. Then, once the situation has been assessed, proceed slowly with caution.

The current political and social climate in America guarantees that there will be discouraging times, but the people who hold fast to success will be evident by their ability to meet a challenge or problem head on without being crippled by the dilemma or temporary defeat. Never allow your mind to become poisoned by defeat. The consequences of such actions will be felt by generations to come. To ensure success, we must fight this disease at all cost.
UHURU is now accepting submissions for the Fall issue.

[We need you to submit stories, poetry, editorials, art, anything you have to say]

Send submissions to:
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Kent State University
Kent, Ohio 44242

Fax: 330.672.4837
Formed in 1972, the association continues to promote better communication and interaction among the Pan-African faculty and staff, and their increased involvement in the academic and socio-cultural affairs of Kent State University, especially as they relate to black student enrollment, retention and graduation.

PAF&SA cannot be effective on this campus without the full participation of our Pan-African students. Student participation in PAF&SA can help bring about meaningful contact between Pan-African colleagues and students.

The Association meets on the last Thursday of each month of the academic year, September through May. The standard time for these meetings is 12 noon, in the Lecture Hall of Department of Pan-African Studies.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs is to provide leadership to institutional efforts focused on the co-curricular learning opportunities, services and programs for students, which complement and support the mission of the University and thereby assist in maximizing student academic and career success, personal development, health and wellness, institutional vitality, enrollment and retention.

Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, 1997
1. Tom Watson, a former K.S.U. student who was shot and paralyzed in Terrace Hall by another student who took his own life afterward. Watson had previously complained of the student's harassment of him, but no action was taken by univ. representatives. (Circa 1980's)

2. Dr. Dorsey voicing his opinion at a BUS rally.

3. ABC's of salvation rehearsing for the play "Tambourine's to Glory" by Langston Hughes. (Circa 1974)

4. A brother and a sister dancing in the lecture hall of the "Tute".
Fifteen years ago, after some intense labor pains, a new course was born into the curriculum of Pan-African Studies. This course, so named “The Black Woman” was introduced to the academic community with much love and confidence. Little did I know then, but was soon to discover, the challenge and responsibility that I had undertaken to nurture this course. It has survived.

Teaching and developing this course has been most rewarding for me. I have learned to view Black womanhood in all its complexity with a profound respect. Throughout antiquity and even more contemporary times, I have studied the contributions of Africa’s “Queens” as they have evolved to become who they are in their various locations throughout the diaspora. It is with awe that I have come to the conclusion that Black women are indeed the Creator’s most phenomenal creatures to say the least. In all areas of life they have played leadership roles. And even though women are globally an oppressed group, they have excelled against the odds. The plight of Black women has served as a model for global women’s development.

Last year left a void in the heart of Black America because it lost two of its most notable women leaders – Dr. Betty Shabazz and Queen Mother Audley Moore. And although it is not the intent of this writing to summarize the great list of contributions of these women to the struggle for the liberation of Pan-African peoples, it is suffice to say that they shared the same double jeopardy — being black and female in the American experience. Tragically, on June 23rd, Sister Shabazz fell victim to the other victim in society plagued with a history of racism - the black male. Even the Shabazz family could not escape the influences of a decadent society. Her own flesh and blood, her twelve year old grandson, was responsible for her death. What a terrible blow to womanhood.

The month before, on May 2, 1997, Queen Mother Moore left this life to join the ancestors. And even though “Mother” left us in a more natural way, just over two months shy of her 99th birthday, she lived her entire life committed to the struggle. Once I witnessed “Mother’s” tears of joy and relief to see that young people had begun to take up the cause of reparations – something for which she fought for nearly sixty years.

When The Black Scholar interviewed Queen Mother in 1973, she had just passed her 75th birthday and was very excited to share with us her experiences with the All African Women’s Conference in Tanzania. It was the first conference she had attended where women of all backgrounds from across the globe had come together to discuss global women’s agenda. Mother was impressed to witness and share in the power of unity among “sisters” of the world.

In 1991, I was privileged to reveal to Mother how her influences had impacted the direction which I have recently taken in involving myself in a global women’s organization when I joined a group of sisters in The International Cross-Cultural Black Women’s Studies Institute.

This is an intercontinental network organization which has met since 1987 and taken this conference to London, Zimbabwe, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Germany, Venezuela and Hawaii. This year they will meet in South Africa. In my travels with these sisters, I have come to truly know not only the plight but also the power of Black women globally. In some parts of the world, women of various cultural and ethnic identities organize them-
By Dr. Alene Barnes, Assistant Professor, Pan-African Studies

selves under the banner of “Black Womanhood” since Blackness has been perceived as synonymous with oppression.

I once witnessed a sister from Trinidad via India say, “Since we are not white, we are all Black.” I have also witnessed Pacific women lamenting with such emotional intensity because their cultures had been dismantled by relentless colonizers. And in the villages, far away from tourist attractions, their people have made a serious attempt to preserve their cultural integrity by forming independent educational initiatives and taking pride that only one of them had a colonial high school education. Their idea of freedom is sovereignty and not just accepting Presidential apologies.

I have a Maori sister from Aotearoa who refuses to call the land of her ancestors New Zealand. Because she recognizes the power of maintaining one’s culture and language, she has spent several months incarcerated for protesting British cultural chauvinism and fighting to keep her people’s language and culture preserved in the educational system.

I have come to meet many women who are refugees living in parts of Europe because of their political views and involvements in freedom movements throughout Africa. One sister shared a number of stories about her imprisonment in South Africa and the mental torment of having gone seven years living in the Netherlands before knowing if her children were alive or where they had fled. She recently united with her family back home in a new South Africa. I listened intently to other women who revealed the details of their involvement in bloody revolution for independence in Zimbabwe in 1980. Their memories had fresh impressions of fighting with men and children and losing loved ones in the battle for freedom.

The stories are numerous, some of them horrendous, all of them significant and compelling. My involvement with my sisters has given me the opportunity to re-evaluate, reassess and come to respect womanhood on an elevated level.

I think that ending the year 1997 with the Million Woman March was very appropriate. On October 25, once again sisters showed the world the strength and power of unity among Black women. And even though women’s agenda consists of recurring issues, the persistence of women has always been a key element in their ability to overcome many obstacles. I dedicate this writing to Sister love and the many heroines in the struggle for Black liberation. I sincerely believe it is women who will ultimately save the world from itself. Sisters of the world must continue to show by example that though leadership is a serious responsibility, wrought with pain and suffering, it is also and indispensable position. And as the struggle continues, Black women must continue to equip themselves mentally, spiritually and physically for an arduous journey.

...the Black woman has the responsibility to establish values. A value system based on her own heritage; not an emulation of that of her oppressors.

-Queen Mother Moore
Times change, and things certainly do seem to fall apart. Entropy breaks down social systems just as it does biological organisms. Today’s black student community is quite different from that of three decades ago. For the most part we are not unified, proactive, or moving toward a common goal. Our collective agenda has broken into countless smaller ones that focus on us primarily as individuals. As students, we seem to be largely unconscious, disorganized, and detached and from the larger plight of Black America.

The national movements occurring in Black America during the 1960’s are now virtually nonexistent. Most of the young adults that supported these social movements grew up to be middle class, white collar employees in pursuit of the American Dream. After Dr. King and Malcolm X were assassinated - and the Black Panthers were neutralized - many blacks dropped ideas of collective action in favor individual interests. This abandonment of the struggle led to an emergent black middle class that migrated from the “chocolate” inner city out to the “vanilla” suburbs. Today these people are in their fifties, which means that many of them have children in their late teens and early twenties. These middle class, multicultural, youth largely make up today’s black college-student population. It’s quite obvious that this new generation of black college students has different goals and purposes than their parents did, who probably grew up much less affluent and lived in concentrated black communities.

The current generation of black youth knows very little about “the struggle.” Our parent’s failed pass on their legacy of resistance; instead it seems like they forgot about everything that they stood for when they were our age. We not only have a generation of directionless students, but we also have student leaders that lack the philosophical orientation necessary to blueprint the black student movement! Black United Students, like most other black student unions around the country, no longer embrace a specific philosophy and ideology toward its goal and purpose.

During the organization’s foundation years, it was no secret that BUS was a militant, Black Nationalist student group. Today, BUS is a largely integrationist organization with occasional glimpses of nationalist ethic. But our BUS leaders don’t seem to be consciously, or actively, integrationists like those that once followed Dr. King. Instead it seems as if we’ve philosophically floated into this
neutrality. This unfortunate reality cannot purely be the fault of black students as our parents have failed to produce adequate black leadership for almost three decades. They should have blueprinted a plan for us based on their experience 30 years ago.

It’s been said that the current nationwide population of black students should be remembered as the “Freaknik Generation” because it appears that sex, drugs and rap music are more important to us than organizing our community. Is this label valid when applied to KSU? Could this possibly be the reason that word of a party spreads like wildfire though the community while BUS is apathetically ignored? Does this label shed any news into the spontaneous combustion of various smaller black student groups that once provided a unified front of black student organizations? It certainly does.

Partying hard in college is a big piece of the experience. It comes with the territory just like going to class. The real question is where do we draw the line between partying and organizing? Thirty years ago black students partied just as hard as we do today, but they partied and “built” Oscar Ritchie Hall! Today, we party so much that we are blind to obvious indications that we’re on the verge of losing Oscar Ritchie Hall. Across the country, black studies departments are being dismantled in the name of multiculturalism. The very academic institutions that our parents struggled to erect are openly being disected as the Freaknik Generation continues to “kick it.”

Black studies departments are partly being dismantled because black students don’t support them as they used to. We seem to have forgotten the purpose of a “Black Education”. Ironically, in many cases, our own parents deter us from taking these types of courses. Black studies departments train black students to be leaders. The information relayed in class must be processed and acted upon once we accept the responsibility of leading black students. This praxis approach is one of the few ways that we can restructure our fragmented student unions. Few of our black student leaders regularly take courses in black studies departments. We have to realize that just as black studies departments are being academically reorganized, the black student union is also at its weakest point ever! These two institutions go hand-in-hand as one cannot properly sustain itself without the other. This is now evident as both are in decline, and both have few ties that call for an agenda conducive to the black college student/faculty experience.

So what must we do now? Obviously we are in dire need of a rude awakening. Reality must hit us so hard that we have to realize that we can’t just up and abandon ideas of racial consciousness. Cultural philosophy must be the backbone of our struggle; racial consciousness and ideology blueprints a plan for achieving our goals and purposes. Therefore, since black studies departments reveal the philosophical blueprints of Black Nationalism, Cultural Integration, Pan Africanism, etc., we must begin by saving/strengthening our departments so that the black student union can have a pool of “talented tenters” from which to breed leadership. Black student leaders are few in number and are transient by way of their term in office, which is generally a year. On the other hand, black studies departments nurture several hundred minds during that same academic year. Black student union leaders must emerge from black studies departments! The void of philosophical blueprints has allowed BUS to travel in circles since the early 1980s! The “NEW ERA,” IAAA, and Black Cultural Center all aligned themselves with philosophies that guided their struggle, which shifted to Pan Africanism in the late 1970’s with the creation of the Department of Pan African Studies.

Black United Students has been fighting the same battles for nearly thirty years! The only difference between yesterday and today is the simple fact that our parents had a blueprint, and we don’t! Every year, without fail, BUS has issues concerning university funding, campus and community racism, and rifts with the KSU Police Department. These problems manifest in different ways, but in essence they are still the same battles being fought - under different circumstances - over and over again. BUS needs a blueprint! Racial consciousness, cultural philosophy, and ideology, provide guidance and purpose to our social movements. BUS was effective 30 years ago because it was founded on these ideas. Times have definitely changed; a militant, nationalist approach may no longer be the most conducive blueprint for BUS. If it’s not, black student leaders, both inside and outside of BUS, must decide upon another course of action relative to the black student experience at KSU.

BUS’ first ten years were successful because it stuck to its blueprint. Remember the founding of this organization was initially sparked by Henry Austin’s militant address. The Mass Walkout following the protest of the Oakland PD had militant, nationalist implications because it was based on the Black Panther’s agenda. The call for a “Black Education” was definitely in accordance with the Black Nationalist agenda, as was the Black Watch, which was a militant, nationalist newspaper. The “NEW ERA” was based on militant, Nationalism and their principles guided BUS for almost ten years. Thirty years ago everyone understood where BUS stood as an organization. Today black students hardly even know what BUS stands for! This lack of philosophical orientation has left BUS and the black student community directionless and neutral. Is BUS a Black Nationalist or Cultural Integrationist group? Is it Accommodationist or Pan-African Nationalist? BUS will not reclaim its proactive essence and political power until answers to these questions manifest in the organization’s outlook, motivation, and action.

The door to our future is opened by keys from our past. Hindsight is always 20/20; an understanding of BUS history allows us to see our present condition more clearly. Maybe if black students, and the university at large, were more aware of the historic conflicts that pervade our experience, we could possibly bring resolution to these ever-aging issues. If not, we will continue to fight these battles for another thirty years.
Back in the day, Fall Quarter, 1969. I arrived as a freshman at KSU. The first person I met was a brother by the name of Larry Simpson, the current president of the Black United Students. He wanted me to know about the “Flunkout Courses,” that incoming freshmen (particularly, Black) were regularly advised to take, and which were guaranteed to flunk them out of the university.

I was then, during that first semester and in the subsequent years, exposed to and a participant in the presence of this black student organization on the predominantly white Kent State campus. In retrospect, it was a cultural breath of fresh air, though I did not know it then, nor was I aware of all the circumstances that had converged to necessitate the unique environment that I would grow and mature in.

The late 1960’s was a time of American consciousness transformation. This phenomenon was due primarily, to the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement which was the continuation of prior efforts to get America to, as Dr. M.L. King said, “to live up to what was put on paper,” regarding the equal rights owed to its citizenry that had been commonly referred to as African, Negro, Colored, Black, & etc. The 60’s, even more than the 50’s, intensified the Black and White cultural and racial polarities that were now finding full expression as anger, frustration and fear, which when coupled with ignorance and mis-education produced hate among both groups, and had manifested as violence, urban destruction and in many instances, death.

Malcolm, Martin, John and Robert Kennedy, the leaders on the national level of our society were all victims of assassinations. On the more local level, during my third quarter as a freshman, the deaths of four students would bring worldwide attention to our campus. By this time in 1970, KSU, like numerous other colleges and universities across this nation were atmospheres of a growing number of student organizations that were politically and culturally motivated by the circumstances of the times. The Civil Rights struggles had evolved into the Black Consciousness movement by this time and the college students had become the new vanguard since the mid-1960’s, from the sit-ins and freedom rides to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating committee, [SNCC]. Their ideological departure from the (M.L.King) Non-Violent philosophy, and their embracing on Malcolm’s “Self-Defense by any Means Necessary” philosophy was a result of seeing no significant change in the physical, political, or social status of the Black American majority.

The Politically motivated slogan of “Black Power” frightened White America, due to their generally nebulous interpretations of what the term meant, and the various connotations that were associated with other coexisting terms like Black Revolution, Black Nationalism, Black Militants, and the organization known as the Black Panthers were equally prevalent in the media during these years.

Within Black communities all across America, these terms coexisted with a new attitude that was embodied in the concept of “Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud,” and “Black is Beautiful.” These were culturally affirmative terms for the first time among a people in America whose history and culture had been denied, distorted, and collectively non-existent since their arrival on these shores unlike all other non-indigenous Americans.

In 1968, colleges and universities all across America, the Black student groups and organizations asserted their recognition of these realizations and more, when they decided to protest and demand that these institutions of higher education provide them with courses of study that

Thirty Years of Black Student Leadership:

where we have been,
WHERE WE NEED TO BE.

By E Timothy Moore, UHURU Faculty Advisor
would finally enable them to learn of their African American History and Culture. Though the tactics varied from campus to campus and region to region, their motivations and the reasons for them were the same.

At Kent State University during this time, similar and more specific circumstances necessitated the decision by the Black United Students to collectively “Walk-out” and away from the campus. This had become the turning point in the self-determination of the BUS leadership and membership. The subsequent negotiations between them and the university officials were based on the conditions that upon their return, efforts would be initiated to provide them with a Black Studies program and a Black Cultural Center. By the time of my arrival in 1969, they were both in operation on the Campus. The Black Cultural Center was located on the site of the Business Administration Building across from Satterfield Hall, and was a haven for Black Students on this Campus, a true place that we called our own literally and figuratively. It was a three-story house that was called the old Ward House, which we renamed as the Kuumba House (Kiswahili for the House of Creativity). We could study there, party there, prepare our own food there, and just fellowship there without the concern of anyone telling us what we could or could not do.

Academically speaking, by 1969, Dr. Edward W. Crosby had already been appointed as the Director of the Black Studies endeavor that was established as the Institute for African American Affairs, (IAAA) and the office existed in room 106 Kent Hall. Under the Leadership of Dr. Crosby, Wiley Smith III, Subash Shah, Willie Robinson, Anne Adams Graves, Hulda Smith Graham, Chief Fela Sowande, and numerous others, a new approach to education had arrived at Kent State.

Even though the Institute began with what Crosby referred to as a shoestring budget, his and the faculty and staff’s ingenious and innovative approach to education would begin from a stable pedagogical foundation that was designed to impact both the cognitive and the affective aspects of the student’s educational experience. Through the years to follow, Black students had the best of both worlds. The Institute had relocated its offices and classroom spaces to the second floor of Lowry Hall during 1970-71, and later acquired the Old Student Union Building in 1972, (Oscar Ritchie Hall). Named after Professor Ritchie, who taught in the Sociology Department from 1947–68. The Institute’s course offerings continued to grow and the cultural center, after having to relocate, (due to the construction of the Business Administration Building) eventually came under the administrative control of the Institute, and was now to permanently coexist in the same building. This was the beginning of what is now the Center of Pan-African Culture.

Under the managerial leadership of these two operations with the continual support of and interaction with the Black student populations, the growth and nurturing process enabled the establishment of the Department Of Pan-African Studies in 1976. This is the reason why Oscar Ritchie Hall to this day, is referred to as the Institute or the “Tute,” by older alumni, and why the building has also through the years, been acknowledged as “The House That BUS Built.”

As a witness and participant in the development of all these positive accomplishments, the observations of negative experiences along the way are worthy of articulation for two primary reasons. First, to show what was achieved against the odds, and second to provide knowledge to prevent the repetition of what we should have learned from the first time around.

It is and has been commonly known in academia, that many faculty in most existing disciplines in Higher Education across America have always regarded Black Studies departments, programs, and courses, with a high degree of what I refer to as condescending contempt. Many, still to this day at KSU, have never come to our department to see what it is that we have been doing and how well we do it. We provide accurate documented information which enables all students to learn things they never knew concerning the history, culture and contributions of people of African Descent.

It is easier to not partake of the courses, programs and activities we offer, and to sit back and judge us from afar. Many on this campus among the faculty and advising staff throughout the university continually attempt to discourage students, Black and White, from taking our courses. Despite this reality our courses remain full with students of every ethnicity and we know that the aspiration to achieve a true understanding of DIVERSITY now having been discussed by numerous committees as a requirement at KSU has already been in practice in our Department and Cultural Center.

As a former Minister of Culture for Black United Students and later as President in 1971, as an undergraduate, then a graduate student, and during my 23 years as a professor, I recall and offer the following observations for future leaders to keep in mind as they aspire to take on the roles and responsibilities of future leadership either as students or later in your lives.

The Black United Students were both consistent and inconsistent at varying times throughout their existence due to a number of factors. They remained consistent in their vigilance to protect, support and represent the struggles of the Black
student population in their relations with the university at-large. They were inconsistent with regard to varying ideological attitudes embodied by the changing leadership throughout the years. A few examples of this fact will follow.

The existing Black Revolution mentality of the late 60’s manifested as a “Blacker than Thou” mentality, and had become an alienating factor within the organization in the early 1970’s. Many Black women who were dedicated to the cause, were publicly embarrassed and singled out because they chose not to wear their hair in the popular “Afro” or “Natural” hairstyle of those times, or they chose to continue wearing “Miniskirts” instead of African oriented clothing. This insistence by the BUS leadership led to alienation of many dedicated members at differing times. Another alienating phenomenon was the presence of the Black Fraternities and Sororities which constituted a significant portion of the Black Student population regardless of their reasons for joining. The reality was that they constituted a major influence that some BUS leaders felt was counter productive to the ideological position of the organization, and in this context, many forms of alienation from this population also developed from public and attitudinal accusations.

One of the reasons that I was encouraged to run for the BUS presidency was due to these two factors I had observed, and which others were aware of. My involvement with the internal BUS organization, and my membership in one of the fraternities, was viewed as a means to bring the two groups back together under my administration. It never was fully achieved because emotions and attitudes were too deep to bridge the ideological gap which has remained throughout the decades since then and up to the present.

Superficial reasons like these and others that time and space will not allow me to elaborate on, have continued to undermine the unity of our collective efforts. I say this now and for consideration of all who aspire to lead. There is currently an “Afrocentric” ideology that has evolved in academia. There are some who in the same manner as their predecessors are perpetuating the same attitudes as before and which are continuing to alienate instead of unite the collective black student population.

In this day and age, a person who wears dreadlocks is not necessarily a person with the proper consciousness of their heritage and culture, just as a black person who chooses to wear blonde or different colored hair could indeed be both conscious and dedicated to the cause of what is right, for Black and all other people. There are those in our midst that are Black, but not committed to what is right, but to their own agendas, and they are, or will be known by their fruits. There are equally those that are not Black and who are committed to what is right. They too are known by their fruits and have always been welcomed among us.

To current and/or future leaders, what has come before you and what lies ahead of you depends on what you acquire, and what you do with it. The true meaning of “Afrocentric leadership, as chief Sowande taught us, long before the new term became popular, was that one’s consciousness must be grounded in REVERENCE FOR LIFE, as was the case with our traditional African ancestors. It necessitates the acknowledgement of a Unified Relationship between the Spiritual Source of us all, between Humanity as the Caretakers of the Planet, and with the World of Nature or Mother Earth, the source of our sustenance.

If as a future leader, you cannot practice each aspect of this ancestral attitude in your endeavors, whatever they may be, in my estimation, don’t waste our, or your time, and don’t try to pass yourself off as being Afrocentric, because you too will be known by your fruits. We don’t need words or ideology without the practice or experience to back them up. To call yourself Afrocentric, and to not know or interact meaningfully with African students and faculty on this campus is flawed. We do not collectively interact with them, nor they with us. This has been the case since I was an undergraduate student. What’s changed? Many of them are just as confused about us as we are about them. Whose fault is it? Better still, what are we going to do to change it? We are all a part of the African Diaspora (the dispersed ones throughout the world). Not only were we physically dispersed but we have been mentally dispersed on a collective and individual basis. Individually, then collectively, we each will have to make the journey back to a consciousness and appreciation of our cultural heritage.

Proper Afrocentrism has it’s place, because it has always been grounded in the above. It will keep you in touch with what is best for our people and for the rest of humanity and will assist our badly needed spiritual and material realignment. Don’t repeat what we already should have learned. The time for superficial cliques and judgements is passing away. We have a new agenda that will necessitate a focus on true manhood, womanhood, parent and familyhood, character, integrity, respect, a true understanding of the meaning of Love for our Spiritual Source, and for Peace, within our Selves and on our Planet.

This kind of leadership, The ancestors, there and here, deserve, and will smile upon.
Know Thy Self
A modern adaptation of an ancient proverb

A person who knows not
And knows not that they know not
Is foolish — disregard them

A person who knows not
And knows that they know not
Is simple — teach them

A person who knows not
And believes that they know
Is dangerous — avoid them

A person who knows
and knows not that they know
Is asleep — awaken them

A person who knows
And knows that they know
Is wise — follow them

All of these persons reside in you
Know Thy Self
And to Maat be true