

A MINORITY OF ONE

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Nearly two decades have elapsed since I entered Lehigh as a freshman. Within that period the University has undergone a wide variety of changes. Some of these changes have been inconsequential; others have had great significance and have had a measurable impact on the University.

Of the changes that I have observed since my return a few months ago, probably the most significant is the University's recognition of its responsibility to the Negro. Consequently it has recently made a conscious effort to ferret out and accept for admission more than a token number of Negro students.

In 1951 I was the only Negro student admitted with the freshman class. University mythology, in fact, suggests that I was the first Negro student on campus, but I'm not sure how one really knows. Furthermore, I was, to my knowledge, the only Negro student on campus during my student career here.

Fourteen Negro students entered Lehigh in the fall of 1968, bringing to 29 the total number of Negro students currently on campus. This increase in numbers, although modest, represents a significant change in policy; a change which will provide the Negro with the opportunity to obtain the type of education that will enable him to compete favorably for the attractive employment opportunities within our society. In view of the current efforts to alleviate job discrimination, the Negro can move toward sharing in all the benefits that this society has to offer.

While the university is to be commended for its efforts thus far, it is to be emphasized that its commitment to

equal opportunity does not end with admitting an ever increasing number of Negro students. Its responsibility includes giving these students a complete education; seeing that these students have the opportunity to share in all aspects of University life and that a "real world" environment is created for them while they are at the University.

The necessity for providing this complete education is largely due to two factors. First, a sizeable fraction of the Negro students who come to the University come from a predominantly Negro society. Since most of them will work and live in a predominantly white society after graduating, they will have to learn to interact and contribute effectively. Clearly this learning process should start at the University.

Second, under circumstances where Negro students have not had the opportunity to meet with and talk to professionally trained Negroes, the University should provide the opportunity to do so by hiring Negro professors. The presence of such people will demonstrate that opportunities do exist for trained Negroes and that Negroes do share in the decision-making aspects of our society and contribute to its growth. This should act as a source of strength and should stimulate the Negro student in his preparation to enter the society.

With regard to my own educational experiences here I have long believed that the education I received was incomplete. I did not have the opportunity to share in all aspects of University life nor was there a real world environment created for me.

Thus as a freshman I was assigned a private room and as an upperclassman, was denied the opportunity to experience fraternity-type living.

Furthermore, not only were there no other Negro students on campus, there were no Negro professors, secretaries or clerks, nor any Negroes in responsible administrative positions. In fact, unless one had previously been associated with or had grown up in a society that included a body of professional or semi-professional Negroes, one was left with the impression that trained Negroes were non-existent or were prevented from filling these kinds of positions.

When I left the University and went to work for an industrial firm, I learned that the decision makers were not all white, that the real world was one where educated Negroes had responsible positions, where there were Negro secretaries and one where Negroes live and socialize with whites at all levels of society

In view of my foregoing remarks, I believe that in order to meet its commitment to giving the Negro an equal opportunity in our society the University should direct its attention toward: 1. continuing its efforts to bring an increasing number of Negro students each succeeding year; 2. assuring Negro students the opportunity to share in all aspects of University life; and 3. hiring Negro professors, secretaries and administrators.

Although my remarks have been focused primarily on the Negro student, I must point out that it is equally important that a real world picture be painted for the white student.

By providing an opportunity for the white student to see Negroes occupying responsible positions here on the campus and working effectively with white colleagues, the white student should be prepared to interact and contribute effectively in a society where it is not unlikely that his superior, secretary, client, or neighbor may be a Negro.

