

The Victim's Revolution on Campus

There are few places as serene and opulent as an American university campus. The students move in small groups, heading for class, the library, or the dining hall, greeting their friends and apparently conscious of being part of a community. At the major universities, gigantic auditoriums, dormitories, and gymnasiums sprawl across the landscape, advertising a tremendous investment of resources. At the prestige schools, such as those of the Ivy League, impressive domes and arches give off a distinct aroma of old money and tradition. Across the lawns the scholars come and go, talking of Proust and Michelangelo. Tributes to the largesse of democratic capitalism, American universities are nevertheless intellectual and social enclaves, by design somewhat aloof from the pressures of the "real world."

For the last decade or so, the larger society has not heard much from the university, certainly little of the truculence and disruption that seemed a campus staple in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reason for the taciturn university atmosphere of the eighties, commentators generally agree, is that the current generation of young people lacks social consciousness, and cares mainly about careers and making money. Yet in the past few years, the American campus appears to be stirring again. University outsiders have been shocked to hear of a proliferation of bigotry on campus; at the University of Michigan, for example, someone put up posters which said, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste—especially on a nigger." Typically these ugly incidents are accompanied by noisy protests and seizures of administration buildings by minority activists, who denounce the university as "institutionally racist." Both bewildered and horrified, the university leadership adopts a series of measures to detoxify the atmosphere, ranging from pledges to reform the "white male curriculum" to censorship of offensive speech.

Both university insiders as well as informed off-campus observers

know that the recent incidents of bigotry have produced a good deal of excess on all sides. Responding to several cases of insensitivity or flagrant bigotry at Michigan, student and faculty activists demanded that all black professors be given immediate tenure, that admissions requirements such as standardized test scores be abolished, and that female and minority students be permitted to conduct hearings to penalize white students whom they find guilty of making racially and sexually "stigmatizing" remarks. In this case, the university administration took each of these demands seriously and partially acquiesced in them, agreeing to give preferential treatment to minority student and faculty applicants over non-minorities with stronger qualifications, and to adopt censorship regulations outlawing speech offensive to "persons of color," as well as women and homosexuals.

It is not always obvious, in these disputes, whose side a reasonable person should take, or whether it is possible, in good conscience, to endorse any side at all. The middle ground seems to have disappeared as a consequence of ideological fracas and polarization; whether it can be restored is an open question. But for those who visit any American campus, peruse the student newspaper, enter the student union and talk with some of the undergraduates, or examine the lectures and workshops listed on the bulletin board, it is clear that the heavily publicized racial confrontations on campus are mere symptoms of much deeper changes that are rapidly under way, with far-reaching consequences for American society.

These are changes in the intellectual and moral infrastructure of the American university, not in its outer trappings. Within the tall gates and old buildings, a new worldview is consolidating itself. The transformation of American campuses is so sweeping that it is no exaggeration to call it an academic revolution. The distinctive insignia of this revolution can be witnessed on any major campus in America today, and in all major aspects of university life.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Virtually all American universities have changed their admissions rules so that they now fill a sizable portion of their freshman class each year with students from certified minority groups—mainly blacks and Hispanics—who have considerably lower grade point averages and standardized test scores than white and Asian American applicants who are refused admission. Since it is often difficult for minorities admitted

on the basis of preferential treatment to compete, most universities offer an array of programs and incentives, including cash grants, to encourage these students to pass their courses and stay in school. The coveted perks of so-called affirmative action policies have sometimes been extended to other groups claiming deprivation and discrimination, such as American Indians, natives of Third World countries, women, Vietnam veterans, the physically disabled (now sometimes called the "differently abled"), homosexuals, and lesbians.

- At the University of California at Berkeley, black and Hispanic student applicants are up to twenty times (or 2,000 percent) more likely to be accepted for admission than Asian American applicants who have the same academic qualifications. Ernest Koenigsberg, a Berkeley professor of business who has served on several admissions committees, asks us to imagine a student applicant with a high school grade point average of 3.5 (out of a possible 4.0) and a Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score of 1,200 (out of a possible 1,600). "For a black student," Koenigsberg says, "the probability of admission to Berkeley is 100 percent." But if the same student is Asian American, he calculates, "the probability of admission is less than 5 percent." Koenigsberg, one of the architects of the policy, is satisfied with this outcome. "I suppose it's unjust, in a way, but all rules are unjust."¹

- At Ivy League colleges, which are among the most competitive in the nation, incoming freshmen have average grade scores close to 4.0 and average SATs of 1,250 to 1,300. According to admissions officials, however, several of these schools admit black, Hispanic, and American Indian students with grade averages as low as 2.5 and SAT aggregates "in the 700 to 800 range."²

- A similar pattern can also be found at state schools. Over the past five years, the University of Virginia has virtually doubled its black enrollment by accepting more than 50 percent of blacks who apply, and fewer than 25 percent of whites, even though white students generally have much better academic credentials. In 1988, for example, the average white freshman at the university scored 240 points higher on the SAT than the average black freshman. An admissions dean told the *Washington Post*, "We take in more from the groups with weaker credentials and make it harder for those with stronger credentials."³

- At Pennsylvania State University, preferential treatment for black students extends beyond admissions; the university offers financial incentives to induce blacks to maintain minimum grades and graduate.

All black students who maintain a grade average of C to C+ during the course of a year get checks from the school for \$580; for anything better than that, they get \$1,160. This official policy endures for all four years of college; it is not connected with financial aid; it applies regardless of economic need. White and other minority students are ineligible for the cash awards.⁴

- Financial subsidies are also offered elsewhere. Starting in the fall of 1990, as part of a program to increase black enrollment by 50 percent, Florida Atlantic University is offering free tuition to every black student who is admitted, regardless of financial need. President Anthony Catanese said the measure is necessary to demonstrate that FAU is "serious about recruiting."⁵ Miami-Dade Community College recruits minority students by promising that, if they do not find jobs in their fields of study after graduation, the college will refund their tuition money. No other students qualify for this money-back guarantee.⁶ Earlham College in Indiana has a standing offer restricted to black, Hispanic, and American Indian residents of the state: if they choose to attend, the school will replace their student loans with grants.⁷ And the University of Nebraska uses state money to fund special scholarships of \$1,500 to \$3,995 which Vice Chancellor James Griesen maintains are essential "to correct a documented under-representation of specified minorities in our student population."⁸

- Sometimes university leaders offer justifications for these preferences. Erdman Palmore, a Duke University professor who serves as chairman of the Committee on Black Faculty, maintains that financial inducements are essential for minority students and faculty whose social contributions have been historically undervalued. "By bidding up the price of blacks," says Palmore, "we are hoping to increase their value."⁹ Michael Harris, professor of religious studies at the University of Tennessee, argues for greater preferential treatment for minorities and suspension of academic requirements because "when you see the word 'qualifications' used, remember that this is the new code word for whites."¹⁰

- Although they are stipulated as the prime beneficiaries, not all blacks feel honored by preferential treatment awards. When Stephen Carter, a graduate of Stanford, applied to the Harvard Law School, he received a letter of rejection. Then, a few days later, two Harvard officials telephoned him to apologize for their "error." One explained, "We assumed from your record that you were white." The other noted that the school had recently obtained "additional information that should have been counted in your favor," namely the fact that Carter is black.

Carter recalled:

Naturally I was insulted by this. Stephen Carter, the white male, was not good enough for the Harvard Law School. Stephen Carter, the black male, not only was good enough, but rated agonized telephone calls urging him to attend. And Stephen Carter, color unknown, must have been white: how else would he have achieved what he did in college? In other words, my academic record sounded too good for a black Stanford undergraduate, but not good enough for a white Harvard Law student. Because I was black, however, Harvard was quite happy to scrape me from what it apparently considered the bottom of the barrel.¹¹

- Favorable recruitment and hiring policies are not limited to racial minorities at Columbia University. In 1989, the *Columbia Law Review* announced a recruitment program offering preferential treatment for homosexuals and lesbians. The journal added five extra seats to its editorial board to promote "diversity," including special consideration for "sexual orientation."¹²

IN THE CLASSROOM

Most American universities have diluted or displaced their "core curriculum" in the great works of Western civilization to make room for new course requirements stressing non-Western cultures, Afro-American Studies, and Women's Studies. Since race and gender issues are so sensitive, the university leadership often discourages faculty from presenting factual material that may provoke or irritate minority students. Several professors who cross the academic parameters of what may be said in the classroom have found themselves the object of organized vilification and administrative penalties. Again, these intellectual curbs do not apply to professors who are viewed as the champions of minority interests—they are permitted overtly ideological scholarship, and are immune from criticism even when they make excessive or outlandish claims with racial connotations. This dogmatism extends to the official policy of academic organizations such as the Modern Language Association.

- In the winter of 1989, at the University of Virginia Law School, Professor Thomas Bergin was conducting his usually sprightly class on property. As students responded to his queries, he shot back rebuttals and jibes, egging them on to more thoughtful answers. It is Bergin's

style to employ colloquial jargon; thus when one black student stumbled over a question, Bergin said, "Can you dig it, man?" Some students laughed, the class went on, the bell rang.

The next class day, Bergin entered the room visibly shaken. "I have never been so lacerated," he said. He read from an anonymous note calling him a "racist" and a "white supremacist" on account of his remark to the black student.

Bergin did not ask who wrote the note. He did not explain his intentions, and move on with the class material. Rather, he gave the class a lengthy recital of his racial resume: he did *pro bono* work for the civil rights movement, he was a member of Klanwatch which monitors hate groups, he was active in recruiting minorities to the university, and so on. Eventually Bergin's eyes filled with tears. "I can't go on," he said. He rushed out of the classroom, unable to control himself.¹³

• When Princeton University in the early 1980s debated whether to introduce a Women's Studies program, which would study "gender scholarship" outside the traditional departments, Dante scholar Robert Hollander expressed reservations at the faculty meeting. "I did not like the fact that this was not a debate about academic issues but about political sensitivity," Hollander says. "My colleagues were telling me that they didn't think much of the program, but would vote for it anyway. I spoke out because I did not want to respond cynically."

When he criticized the proposed program for its stated political objectives, however, Hollander remembers being subjected to a barrage of personal attacks. "I achieved instant notoriety. Even now, years later, my speech is the thing that most people remember about me." Hollander was surprised to discover that "colleagues I had worked with for a long time, with whom I got on extremely well, turned on me with incredible savagery. I wanted to say, hey, this is your friend, this is Bob Hollander. But nothing I could say would hold them back."

When the motion to establish Women's Studies passed, Hollander remembers, "Women were embracing and kissing on the floor. This struck me as odd. Was this an academic discussion or a political rally? Were we discussing ideas or feelings? It confirmed what I had feared about the program."

• New approaches to teaching now enjoy prominence and acclaim on campus. Speaking at an October 1989 conference in Washington, Houston Baker of the University of Pennsylvania argued that the American university suffers from a crisis of too much reading and writing. "Reading and writing are merely technologies of control," Baker alleged.

They are systems of "martial law made academic." Instead of "valorizing old power relations," universities should listen to the "voices of newly emerging peoples." Baker emphasized the oral tradition, extolling the virtues of rap music and holding up as an exemplar such groups as Public Enemy and NWA.¹⁴ NWA stands for Niggers With Attitude. The group, among other things, sings about the desirability of violence against white people.¹⁵ Baker himself is regarded as one of the most promising black intellectuals in the country, and a leader of the movement to transform the American academy.

• African American scholar Leonard Jeffries claims that whites are biologically inferior to blacks, that the "ultimate culmination" of the "white value system" is Nazi Germany, and that wealthy Jews were responsible for financing the slave trade. Adopting an evolutionary perspective, Jeffries told his class that whites suffer from an inadequate supply of melanin, making them unable to function as effectively as other groups. One reason that whites have perpetrated so many crimes and atrocities, Jeffries argues, is that the Ice Ages caused the deformation of white genes, while black genes were enhanced by "the value system of the sun."¹⁶ Jeffries is no academic eccentric; he is chairman of the Afro-American Studies department at City College of New York (CCNY), and coauthor of a controversial multicultural curriculum outline for all public schools in New York State. Moreover, such extreme views are now frequently expressed by black scholars and activists.

• Many white students graduate from college with similar ideas. Reflecting several themes now promoted on the American campus, a recent graduate from two of the nation's top universities commented in a national magazine:

I am a male WASP who attended and succeeded at Choate preparatory school, Yale College, Yale Law School, and Princeton Graduate School. Slowly but surely, my lifelong habit of looking, listening, feeling, and thinking as honestly as possible has led me to see that white, male-dominated, Western, European culture is the most destructive phenomenon in the known history of the planet. . . . It is deeply hateful of life and committed to death; therefore, it is moving rapidly toward the destruction of itself and most other life forms on earth. And truly, it deserves to die. . . . We're going to have to bite the bullet of truth. We have to face our own individual and collective responsibility for what is happening—our greed, brutality, indifference, militarism, racism, sexism, blindness. . . . Meanwhile, everything we have put into motion continues to endanger us more every day.¹⁷

• Frequently the sources of such sentiments are minority studies courses. In a manual for race and gender education, distributed by the American Sociological Association, Brandeis University Women's Studies professor Becky Thompson acknowledges the ideological presuppositions of her basic teaching methodology: "I begin the course with the basic feminist principle that in a racist, classist and sexist society we have all swallowed oppressive ways of being, whether intentionally or not. Specifically, this means that it is not open to debate whether a white student is racist or a male student is sexist. He/she simply is. Rather, the focus is on the social forces that keep these distortions in place."¹⁸

• It is now familiar practice for professional associations of scholars to adopt political positions to which they lend their academic credibility. In 1987, the Modern Language Association, whose members include humanities scholars from universities across the country, passed the following resolution: "Be it therefore resolved that the MLA will refrain from locating future conventions, not already scheduled, in any state that has criminalized acts of sodomy through legislation, unless that legislation, though still on the books, has been found to be unconstitutional, or the state has been enjoined from enforcing it through decisions rendered by the courts."¹⁹

LIFE ON CAMPUS

Most universities seek to promote "pluralism" and "diversity" on campus by setting up and funding separate institutions for minority groups; thus one finds black student unions, black dormitories and "theme houses," black fraternities and sororities, black cultural centers, black dining sections, even a black yearbook. Universities also seek to protect minority sensitivities by imposing administrative sanctions, ranging from forced apologies to expulsion, for remarks that criticize individuals or policies based on race, gender, and sexual orientation stereotypes. Since blacks, feminists, and homosexuals are regarded as oppressed victims, they are usually exempt from these restrictions and permitted considerable license in their conduct.

• For example, graduate student Jerome Pinn checked into his dormitory at the University of Michigan to discover that his roommate had covered the walls with posters of nude men. When the young

man told Pinn he was an active homosexual who expected to have partners over, Pinn approached the Michigan housing office and asked to be transferred to another room. "They were outraged by this," Pinn says. "They asked me what was wrong with me—what *my* problem was. I said that I had a religious and moral objection to homosexual conduct. They were surprised; they couldn't believe it. Finally they agreed to assign me to another room, but they warned me that if I told anyone of the reason, I would face university charges of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

• In 1988 the law school faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo adopted a resolution which warned students not to make "remarks directed at another's race, sex, religion, national origin, age or sexual preference," including "ethnically derogatory statements, as well as other remarks based on prejudice or group stereotype." Students who violate this rule should not expect protection under the First Amendment, the faculty rule says, because "our intellectual community shares values that go beyond a mere standardized commitment to open and unrestrained debate." The faculty agrees to take "strong and immediate steps" to prosecute offending students through the university judiciary process, but it will "not be limited solely to the use of ordinary university procedures." The faculty also resolves to write to "any bar to which such a student applies," offering "where appropriate, our conclusion that the student should not be admitted to practice law."²⁰

• Censorship regulations at several colleges today are restrictive enough that a typical policy at the University of Connecticut interprets as "harassment" all remarks that offend or stigmatize women or minorities. Examples of violations of the University President's Policy on Harassment, for which the penalty ranges from a reprimand to expulsion, include "the use of derogatory names," "inconsiderate jokes," and even "misdirected laughter" and "conspicuous exclusion from conversation." At the same time, and in apparent contradiction with this policy, U-Conn places no restrictions on the sexual conduct of students; the handbook notes that "the university shall not regard itself as the arbiter or enforcer of the morals of its students."²¹

• When the University of Pennsylvania recently announced mandatory "racism seminars" for students, one member of the University Planning Committee voiced her concerns about the coercion involved. She expressed her "deep regard for the individual and my desire to protect the freedoms of *all* members of society." A university administrator sent her note back, with the word "individual" circled and the

comment, "This is a RED FLAG phrase today, which is considered by many to be RACIST. Arguments that champion the individual over the group ultimately privilege the 'individuals' who belong to the largest or dominant group."²²

• Although male white students are expected, on pain of punishment, to demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of minority sentiments, Gayatri Spivak, Andrew Mellon Professor of English and cultural studies at the University of Pittsburgh, argues that such qualities as tolerance cannot reasonably be expected of minority victims. "Tolerance is a loaded virtue," said Spivak, "because you have to have a base of power to practice it. You cannot ask a certain people to 'tolerate' a culture that has historically ignored them at the same time that their children are being indoctrinated into it."²³

• A student newspaper funded by Vassar College termed black activist Anthony Grate "hypocrite of the month" for espousing anti-Semitic views while publicly denouncing bigotry on campus. In an acrimonious debate, Grate reportedly referred to "dirty Jews" and added, "I hate Jews." Grate later apologized for his remarks. Meanwhile, outraged that the *Spectator* had dared to criticize a black person, the Vassar Student Association first attempted to ban the issue of the publication, and when that failed it withdrew its \$3,800 funding. The newspaper "unnecessarily jeopardizes an educational community based on mutual understanding," the VSA explained.²⁴

• Some black students have noticed that the campus environment permits and even encourages a double standard on issues affecting race. Rachael Hammer, a bright and attractive young student at Columbia University, said that a black campus activist accused her of being a racist for refusing to date him. "He said: you are going to go out with me," Hammer recalls. "I said no. He then said I was a racist."

Hammer said that the only overt racism she has encountered at Columbia involves hostility directed against whites. "I am told that as a person of color and a member of a historically persecuted group, I cannot be racist against whites," Hammer said. "But blacks can say anything about whites and Jews." Of her prospective suitor, Hammer said, "I knew him since freshman year. Nobody ever heard of him until he got into a fight with a white guy. He turned it into a racial issue that rocked the campus for weeks." Pretty soon, Hammer said, "he started organizing rallies, writing articles in the student paper. His language changed into a kind of ghetto slang. He got into writing poetry—basically a string of epithets about what it felt like to be a black male."

• Among many young blacks on campus, there are hints of profound estrangement and suspicion toward the larger culture. In early 1989, Howard University's campus newspaper, *The Hilltop*, published an article which advanced an argument not infrequently heard on the campus. In "The White Conspiracy," undergraduate Malcolm Carson writes that "black males are specifically programmed for self-destruction by this society. . . . Hundreds of thousands of U.S. military troops are called on to wage urban warfare on our people. . . . An avalanche of cheap heroin was unleashed into our communities to lull our people to sleep. . . . African Americans are beginning to realize that the real enemy is not the brother standing across the street, but the white man in the top floor of the downtown high rise."²⁵

• Feminists are capable of equally stern sentiments. Commenting on the problem of sexual harassment in late October 1989, University of Colorado graduate student Kristen Asmus observed, "Let's just face it. The men in our society cannot control themselves." Her solution? "Women will start fighting back. Women will begin to react with as much violence as men have mustered against them. Women will begin to stop talking about castration, and make it a reality. Women will begin to abandon their life-giving, caring inner nature and start carrying guns. Women will begin to kill men if they have to."²⁶

• University administrators are not always sure how to deal with minority grievance and protest. In May 1989, thirty-one black and Hispanic students barricaded themselves in the office of Stanford president Donald Kennedy, demanding further action on minority issues. Kennedy issued a statement saying "the university will not negotiate on issues of substance in response to unlawful coercion."²⁷ The next day, Kennedy broke down under pressure, went on to negotiate with the students, and committed the university to hiring thirty minority professors over the next decade and doubling the number of minority doctoral students within the next five years.²⁸

• When minority students forcibly occupied the office of the president of the University of Vermont, Lattie Coor, he agreed to sign a seventeen-point agreement, including the provision that "in no case will the number of minorities hired for faculty positions be less than four each year." Coor explained how he came to negotiate with the students. "When it became clear that the minority students with whom I had been discussing these issues wished to pursue negotiations in the context of occupied offices, I agreed to enter negotiation with them."²⁹

• One way in which universities appease minority protesters is

by setting up and funding distinctive black, Hispanic, or Third World organizations. For example, although its handbook advocates racial integration, Cornell University supports a host of ethnic and minority institutions, most of which do not admit, and none of which encourage, white students as members: Cornell Black Women's Support Network; Ethos Minority Yearbook; Black Biomedical and Technical Association; Gays, Bisexuals and Lesbians of Color; La Asociaci6n Latina; La Organizaci6n de Latinas Universitarias; Le Club Haitien; Mexican-American Student Association; Minority Business Students Association; Minority Industrial and Labor Relation Student Organization; Minority Undergraduate Law Society; National Society of Black Engineers; Pamojani Gospel Choir; Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers; Society of Minority Hoteliers; Students of African Descent United; Uhuru Kuumba; Washanga Simba. In addition, there are nine black and Hispanic fraternities and sororities.³⁰

• In some quarters not just whites, but also heterosexuals, are suspect. The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) recently granted official recognition to Lambda Delta Lambda, a lesbian sorority. UCLA officials emphasized, however, that the sorority may not ban heterosexual women from joining.³¹

• The difficulties encountered by universities in their effort to define and promote "diversity" are evident in an incident at Yale University a few years ago. In August 1987, taking account of the extremely well-attended and vocal activism of homosexuals at Yale, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the place was getting a gay reputation.³² Yale has no less than five gay and lesbian groups, including one just for Chicano lesbians.³³ More than a thousand students attend Yale's annual gay-lesbian ball, and gay activist Sara Cohen asks, "What's wrong with a little bestiality?"³⁴ Concerned that this flagrancy would upset alumni donors, President Benno Schmidt of Yale promptly sent a letter to two thousand volunteer fund-raisers, denying that Yale was a "gay school" and concluding, "If I thought there were any truth to the article, I would be concerned too."³⁵ Schmidt's statement caused an eruption at the university. A graduate student announced that he was cancelling his course in homosexual rights. Gay activist groups besieged Schmidt and demanded to know: what was wrong with 25 or even 70 percent of Yale students being homosexual? What was wrong with Yale being a gay school?³⁶ Somewhat chagrined, Schmidt responded that, no, there wouldn't be anything wrong with that, but Yale needed to have a proportionate number of heterosexuals too—for the sake of diversity.³⁷

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As these examples suggest, an academic and cultural revolution is under way at American universities. It is revising the rules by which students are admitted to college, and by which they pay for college. It is changing what students learn in the classroom, and how they are taught. It is altering the structure of life on the campus, including the habits and attitudes of the students in residence. It is aimed at what University of Wisconsin chancellor Donna Shalala calls "a basic transformation of American higher education in the name of multiculturalism and diversity." Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, goes further in observing that "the fundamental premises of liberal education are under challenge. Nothing is going to be the same any more."

This revolution is conducted in the name of those who suffer from the effects of Western colonialism in the Third World, as well as race and gender discrimination in America. It is a revolution on behalf of minority victims. Its mission is to put an end to bigoted attitudes which permit perceived social injustice to continue, to rectify past and present inequities, and to advance the interests of the previously disenfranchised. Since the revolutionaries view xenophobia, racism, sexism, and other prejudices to be endemic and culturally sanctioned, their project seeks a fundamental restructuring of American society. It involves basic changes in the way economic rewards are distributed, in the way cultural and political power are exercised, and also in privately held and publicly expressed opinions.

The American university is the birthplace and testing ground for this enterprise in social transformation.

There are two reasons why such changes are worthy of close and careful examination. The first is that universities are facing questions that will soon confront the rest of the country. America is very rapidly becoming a multiracial, multicultural society. Immigration from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean has changed the landscape with an array of yellow, brown, and black faces.³⁸ Meanwhile, European immigration has shrunk from 50 percent of all arrivals between 1955 and 1964 to around 7 percent between 1975 and the present.³⁹ The recolorization of America is further enhanced by domestic minority birth rates, which exceed that of whites.⁴⁰

The result is a new diversity of pigments and lifestyles. When America loses her predominantly white stamp, what impact will that have on her Western cultural traditions? On what terms will the evanescent majority and the emerging minorities, both foreign and domestic, relate to each other? How should society cope with the agenda of

increasingly powerful minority groups, which claim to speak for blacks, Hispanics, women, and homosexuals? These challenges are currently being faced by the leadership of institutions of higher education.

Universities are a microcosm of society. But they are more than a reflection or mirror; they are a leading indicator. In universities, an environment where students live, eat, and study together, racial and cultural differences come together in the closest possible way. Of all American institutions, perhaps only the military brings people of such different backgrounds into more intimate contact. With coeducation now a reality in colleges, and with the confident emergence of homosexual groups, the American campus is now sexually democratized as well. University leaders see it as a useful laboratory experiment in training young people for a multicultural habitat. Michael Sovern, president of Columbia, observes, "I like to think that we are leading society by grappling earnestly and creatively with the challenges posed by diversity."⁴¹

Since the victim's revolution is transforming what is taught, both inside and outside the American university classroom, the second major reason to examine the changes is to discover what young people are learning these days, particularly on questions of race and gender, and the likely consequences for their future and that of their country.

Numerous books, studies, and surveys have documented the alarming scientific and cultural illiteracy of American students.

• A 1989 survey commissioned by the National Endowment for the Humanities showed that 25 percent of college seniors have no idea when Columbus discovered America; the same percentage confuse Churchill's words with Stalin's, and Karl Marx's ideas with those in the U.S. Constitution. A majority of students were ignorant of the Magna Carta, the Missouri Compromise, and Reconstruction. Most could not link Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton with their major works.⁴²

• A recent survey of five thousand faculty members by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found general agreement about the "widespread lowering of academic standards at their institutions," a deterioration that was only partially camouflaged by an equally "widespread grade inflation."⁴³

• A review of twenty-five thousand student transcripts by Professor Robert Zemsky of the University of Pennsylvania showed broad neglect of mathematics and science courses, especially at the advanced level, and an overall "lack of depth and structure" in what undergraduates study.⁴⁴

• Research indicates that it is possible to graduate from 37 percent of American colleges without taking any courses in history, from 45 percent without taking a course in American or English literature, from 62 percent without studying any philosophy, and from 77 percent without studying a foreign language.⁴⁵

Parents, alumni, and civic leaders all invest substantial resources of time and money in American higher education. They are justifiably anxious about whether the new changes in universities will remedy these problems, or exacerbate them. Will the new policies in academia improve, or damage, the prospects for American political and economic competitiveness in the world? Will they enrich, or debase, the minds and souls of students? Will they enhance, or diminish, the prospects for harmony among different groups? In short, how well will the new project prepare the nation's young people for leadership in the multicultural society of the future?

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The current academic revolution is being conducted at the highest levels of the university establishment. It is what Donald Kagan, dean of arts and sciences at Yale University, calls a "revolution from the top down." This fact distinguishes the contemporary period from the 1960s, when student activists applied pressure to a reluctant and recalcitrant administration. Today's university officials are generally sympathetic and often actively engaged in the victim's revolution. In some cases, they sponsor the changes without any student or faculty demands. These revolutionaries inhabit the offices of presidents, provosts, deans, and other administrators. Thus it is possible to alter the basic character of liberal education without very much commotion; as Kagan says, "Few outside the university have any idea what is going on."

Most university presidents and deans cooperate with the project to transform liberal education in the name of minority victims. This group includes an overwhelming majority of presidents of state universities, and all the presidents of the Ivy League schools. Only two or three college heads in the country have voiced public reservations about the course of the academic revolution.⁴⁶

Here, for instance, are the presidents of four major universities voicing support for the minority agenda. While their statements vary in stridency, all of them diagnose the same underlying inequities, and seek the structural reform of higher education as a solution. Further, they all employ the characteristic vocabulary of the revolution, which

we must learn to recognize as a kind of code language for the changes to which they point.

"We can create a model here of how a more diverse and pluralistic community can work for our society," University of Michigan president James Duderstadt said in a letter to students and faculty.⁴⁷ He added, "Our university has a moral imperative to address the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic groups. . . . The insights and erudition of hitherto excluded groups can enrich our scholarly enterprise; indeed, it seems apparent that we cannot sustain the distinction of our university in the pluralistic world that is our future without the diversity that sustains excellence."⁴⁸

Stanford president Donald Kennedy told the Academic Council in May 1989 that, "we accept the basic design of the multicultural community, and commit ourselves to the encouragement and preservation of these minority groups. We confirm that many minority issues and concerns are not the special pleadings of interest groups, but are Stanford issues—ones that engage all of us."⁴⁹

Keith Brodie, president of Duke University, said in his convocation address to the freshman class in 1989, "We have come to realize that the naturally broadening and civilizing process of a liberal arts education is not enough, by itself, to accomplish the goals of community we have set before us. We must engage intolerance . . . openly and publicly, as a community, at every opportunity."⁵⁰

Donna Shalala of the University of Wisconsin remarked, "I would plead guilty to both racism and sexism. The university is institutionally racist. American society is racist and sexist. Covert racism is just as bad today as overt racism was thirty years ago. In the 1960s we were frustrated about all this. But now, we are in a position to do something about it."

These statements are not mere rhetoric. Several colleges have issued internal blueprints outlining a basic transformation of the campus over the next few years. In March 1989 Smith College published its *Smith Design for Institutional Diversity*, endorsed by President Mary Dunn and the board of trustees, which includes a pledge for Smith to more than quadruple minority representation on the faculty to 20 percent.⁵¹ The Stanford administration has accepted most of the 132 provisions of the *Final Report of the University Committee on Minority Issues*, which calls for compulsory ethnic studies, graduate programs in Afro-American Studies, further expansion of preferential treatment, and funding for "ethnic theme houses" for blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians.⁵² Ohio State operates under the *Ohio State University Action Plan*, which seeks to more than double minority student and

faculty recruitment by 1994, regardless of the available pool of qualified applicants.⁵³ The University of Wisconsin has issued *The Madison Plan*, initiated by the chancellor and now official policy, which includes a timetable for special scholarships for minority students, a minority cultural center, an ethnic studies requirement, sensitivity education in race and gender, and the hiring of at least seventy minority faculty in three years.⁵⁴ The University of Michigan in early 1990 issued its *Michigan Mandate*, claiming credit for hiring seventy-six minority faculty through affirmative action efforts in two years, for multiplying black and Hispanic scholarships and fellowships, for establishing a multimillion-dollar Afro-American studies center, and for allocating \$27 million for various minority-related programs.⁵⁵

Other colleges such as Arizona State, Berkeley, Columbia, Cornell, Florida State, Harvard, Miami University of Ohio, Penn State, Princeton, Rutgers, the State University of New York at Albany, Stockton State, Temple, Tufts, Vassar, Wayne State University, the University of Arizona, UCLA, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Pennsylvania have announced ambitious projects to rearrange admissions and curricular requirements to foster such values as "tolerance" and "diversity." Over the past few years, presidents and deans on most campuses have assembled task forces to set their agenda for "multiculturalism" or "pluralism," and have then incorporated several of their recommendations into official policy. Diversity, tolerance, multiculturalism, pluralism—these phrases are perennially on the lips of university administrators. They are the principles and slogans of the victim's revolution.

Among university professors, there are many qualms about the academic revolution under way because it challenges traditional norms of scholarship and debate. But these doubts are dissipating with time, as the composition of the body of American faculty rapidly changes. Older, traditionally liberal professors are retiring and making way for a new generation, weaned on the assorted ideologies of the late 1960s: the civil rights movement, the protest movement against U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the burgeoning causes of feminism and gay rights. Many of these scholars in the humanities and social sciences have now invested their energies in what sociologist David Riesman of Harvard University calls "domestic liberation movements"; in fact, at a recent conference on liberal education, the *New York Times* found the young academics in agreement that "just about everything . . . is an expression of race, class or gender."⁵⁶

Speaking with the typical frankness of these newly ascendant

activists, black scholar Henry Louis Gates of Duke University remarks, "Ours was the generation that took over buildings in the late 1960s and demanded the creation of Black and Women's Studies programs and now, like the return of the repressed, we have come back to challenge the traditional curriculum."⁵⁷ Middlebury English professor Jay Parini writes, "After the Vietnam War, a lot of us didn't just crawl back into our library cubicles; we stepped into academic positions. With the war over, our visibility was lost and it seemed for a while—to the unobservant—that we had disappeared. Now we have tenure, and the work of reshaping the universities has begun in earnest."⁵⁸ Annette Kolodny, dean of the humanities at the University of Arizona, says that she was ideologically trained as a leader of the Berkeley protests of the 1960s. "I see my scholarship as an extension of my political activism," she says. As a former worker for Caesar Chavez's United Farm Workers, Kolodny maintains that her scholarship is designed to expose "the myths the U.S. has always put forward about itself as an egalitarian nation." In fact, she argues, the United States has "taken this incredibly fertile continent and utterly destroyed it with a ravaging hatred."⁵⁹

These younger professors are now the beliwethers of the victim's revolution. Already their influence is dominant; soon they will entirely displace the old guard. As it is, most of the senior humanities and social science faculty acquiesce in the changes, and mildly protest only when the issue engages obvious faculty concerns such as intellectual freedom or the preservation of academic standards. Outside the mainstream of the academy, the National Association of Scholars, a small group of faculty crusaders, is launching a bold but somewhat quixotic effort to arrest the pace of the revolution.⁶⁰

Although it began in the humanities and social sciences, the reverberations of the revolution are now being felt in law schools, medical schools, and the departments of the hard sciences which previously considered themselves exempt from campus agitation. Many law school and medical school deans and faculty are already reconciled to routinely extending admission to minority students who are academically less prepared than other applicants who are refused admission. Professor Bernard Davis of Harvard Medical School says that faculty face enormous pressure from the administration to pass black and Hispanic students even when they fail the same exam repeatedly.⁶¹ For the first time, undergraduate and graduate professors in physics, chemistry, and biology are accused by minority activists of practicing "white male science" and operating "institutionally racist" departments. While many continue to resist pressures for preferential minority hiring and the inclusion of

minority and especially female "perspectives" in the hard sciences, they seem bewildered about, and mute in responding to, accusations of systematic and methodological racism and sexism; consequently, with administrative and activist pressure, the victim's revolution is beginning its siege of the final bastion of "pure scholarship."

Many students are unable to recognize the scope of the revolution, because it is a force larger than themselves, acting upon them. Thus they are like twigs carried by a fast current. They are well aware that something is going on around them, and they might even squirm and complain, but for the most part students do not shape the rules that govern their academic and social lives in the university. Rather, those rules are intended to shape them. There are, on virtually every campus, organized alliances of minority, feminist, and homosexual students, who generally form the youth corps of the revolution. But they are not its prime movers: their numbers are too small, and they have no power to make the fundamental decisions that change the basic structure and atmosphere of the university.

Iconoclastic student newspapers at a number of universities mount spirited attacks on the revolution. Of the fifty or so publications, perhaps the most famous is the *Dartmouth Review* at my own alma mater. As a former editor of the *Review*, I witnessed first-hand engagement with the administration, although I had graduated long before the newspaper's most notorious showdowns—the 1986 sacking of anti-apartheid shanties by conservative students on the Dartmouth green, and the bitter confrontation between *Review* reporters and a black music professor in 1988.

While these recent episodes are not representative of the content of the *Review* or other papers, they illustrate the temptations to which overzealous undergraduate activists sometimes succumb. No doubt some of these antics are sophomoric, but we must remember that they are largely carried out by sophomores. The result, however, is that the influence of the "alternative student papers" is generally limited to confounding a few professors and deans, offering a therapeutic outlet for a small group of students, and in some cases informing and mobilizing a part of the alumni body. These undergraduate renegades are not powerful enough to stall the victim's revolution; perhaps for this reason, some of their attacks are reflexive, ill-considered, unkind, and lacking in historical perspective; thus they become further symptoms, rather than remedies, for campus maladies. Much of the time, they serve as a kind of journalistic tripwire, kicking up issues larger than they are equipped to handle.

Consequently, the current academic revolution on behalf of minor-

ity victims moves at a swift pace. Nothing interrupts it or gives it pause; changes are proposed, accepted, and implemented in broad, continuous strokes. It is not that the changes are indefensible, but simply that they are seldom if ever subjected to criticism; thus there is never any need to offer an explanation.

Nevertheless, it is crucial that the arguments for the revolution be made, objections to them offered, and the two sides weighed against one another. Such an approach will ensure that universities define and defend their objectives, that mechanisms are developed to carry out worthy objectives, and that both the ends and the means serve the students for whom the universities exist in the first place.

* * *

In this book, I dramatize the transformation in academia through an examination of six episodes at different universities—Berkeley, Stanford, Howard, Michigan, Duke, and Harvard—which are in the vanguard of the revolution of minority victims. These colleges are leaders in the academy whose policies smaller schools often emulate. In every instance, I supply examples to show that the phenomena I describe are widely experienced on other campuses. Each case study exposes the conflicts and challenges which the revolution must face, and reveals kernels of principle upon which priorities have been established and those challenges resolved. Through narrative and firsthand interviews, I seek to give the reader an inside look into how the controversial claims of the new politics of race and sex assert themselves in all areas of campus life, and are debated and adjudicated within the governing framework of the university.

Three basic issues are addressed:

Who Is Admitted?

How are preferential treatment policies justified which treat racial groups differently and admit some students based on academic merit, and others largely or exclusively based on their skin color? Is there such a thing as good discrimination? What effect does "affirmative action" have in the classroom and on campus? What becomes of students who benefit from preferential admissions? What are the arguments of justice and of expediency that warrant such programs?

What Is Studied?

Why are universities expelling Homer, Aristotle, Shakespeare, and other "white males" from their required reading list? Is it true

that a study of non-Western and minority cultures will liberate students from ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, and homophobia? What are the merits of overtly ideological scholarship in Afro-American Studies and Women's Studies programs? What totems and taboos attend the teaching of sensitive material in race and gender scholarship? What do students learn from the new curriculum that prepares them for life after college?

Life on Campus

Should universities promote integration or separatism? Why do minority students attack exclusivity, yet seem to prefer segregated institutions for themselves? Should universities encourage or allow corresponding all-white groups, and if not, why? Is there a case for university censorship of opinions that trespass on the feelings of blacks, feminists, and homosexuals? Should universities subject students to "sensitivity education" aimed at raising their consciousness of race and gender? Why are there so many racial incidents on campuses in recent years, and why do they happen most frequently at universities which are most resolute in their campaigns to combat bigotry?

While in each case I show what internal and external forces generate the conflicts that universities must face, my emphasis throughout is on how the university leadership deals with its challenges. It is here, after all, that social responsibility for establishing a healthy educational and cultural environment ultimately rests, and it is those in charge who make the rules that either solve problems or make them worse. Since I uncover and document many areas where our current university leadership seems to fall short, in my final chapter I suggest ways in which these issues could be handled more responsibly, so that the revolution of minority victims may more effectively achieve its legitimate aspirations, and all students may be better prepared for the challenges of career and citizenship in the society in which they will find themselves after graduation.

* * *

During my research for this book I discovered a tremendous curiosity, on the part of my sources, about my own background and where I was "coming from." Issues of race and sex are inevitably personal, and detachment is considered difficult, if not impossible. I am usually credited with a "Third World perspective," a term I find unclear and problematic. For readers who are interested, however, I

offer a few personal comments which may be helpful in establishing my own interest and viewpoint.

I am a native of India who came to the United States in 1978. India is a democratic country struggling to accommodate enormous religious, tribal, and cultural heterogeneity. From my childhood I have experienced, and wondered about, this struggle, which is a subject of ongoing conversation and debate among Indians. America affords me a rare opportunity to examine questions of ethnocentricity, race, and gender, but from a unique cultural perspective. On questions that are so close to our daily lives, that engage us on both a conscious and subconscious level, I think that an element of critical distance may be helpful and illuminating. It makes possible observations that are more difficult to make when one is too close to, or engulfed by, an issue.

A personal anecdote may clarify why I believe this is so. A month or so after I arrived in the United States and enrolled, as a Rotary exchange student, in a public high school in Arizona, my host parents urged me to take someone from my class to the Homecoming dance. At first I was reluctant, but finally agreed. I approached a pretty young woman who said that she would have to ask her parents but would let me know tomorrow.

The next day I asked, "What did they say?"

She looked at me, "Who?"

"Your parents," I said.

"Say about what?"

At first I was simply astounded, but then I realized, with a sinking feeling, that I had approached *the wrong girl*. It was only later that I realized what my problem was: I thought all white women looked alike.

Later, when I was at Dartmouth and heard a student in the Afro-American Society charge that it was "grossly racist" that she was mistaken for someone else by a white student, I was sympathetic but could not be totally outraged. My own experience helped me understand that, no matter what our skin color or background, it is not easy to transcend our cultural particularity. Provincialism is a universal problem which all groups must confront; it is not a moral deformity confined to whites.

I enrolled as a freshman at Dartmouth in 1979, and graduated in 1983. I spent the next two years at Princeton University, where I edited an alumni magazine. Since then, I have continued to observe and follow goings-on in the American academy. For the past two years I have researched and studied the revolution of minority victims, spending a great deal of time on various campuses, attending classes and

interviewing administrators, faculty, and students. As a student, I developed hypotheses that subsequent research has systematized or, in some cases, invalidated. Although I now write from a position more informed, and I hope more mature, than that of my undergraduate days, I believe that my close contact with the university over the past decade has given me a valuable eyewitness position to observe the sweeping changes going on around me.

I found, during my recent campus travels, that I can still pass for a student. I feel a bond with the new generation of young people, and do not agree with those who say that today's students are only interested in personal aggrandizement. Everywhere I observed a strong idealism, a search for principles that transcend expediency and self-interest. I admire this youthful quest and believe that universities should sustain and encourage it.

I especially empathize with minority students, who seek to discover principles of equality and justice that go considerably beyond the acquisition of vocational skill. Acutely conscious of America's history of exclusion and prejudice, they know that their past victories have not come without a struggle, and they yearn to find their place in the university and in society, to discover who they are, individually and as a people. These are challenges I faced very recently in college, and continue to face as a first-generation immigrant. Thus I feel a special kinship with minority students, and believe that the university is the right location for them to undertake their project of self-discovery.

I believe, as John Henry Newman writes in *The Idea of a University*, that the goal of liberal learning is "that true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence." This knowledge of ourselves, and of the geographic and intellectual universe we inhabit, is ultimately what liberates and prepares us for a rich and full life as members of society. The term *liberal* derives from the term *liberalis*, which refers to the free person, as distinguished from the slave. It is in liberal education, properly devised and understood, that minorities and indeed all students will find the means for their true and permanent emancipation.