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The Minority Experience at Gettysburg College: The Hanson Years (1961-1977)

Abstract

The years of C. Arnold Hanson's term as president at Gettysburg College were years of turbulence, change, and challenge. Rising to the position of president in 1961, in the dawning of a dynamic era of modern American history, C. A. Hanson served well into the middle of the next decade, during which time he helped guide Gettysburg College through some of its most trying and vital changes. This was the era of the hippie and the free thinker, the era of the Women's and Civil Rights Movements, the era of Vietnam and anti-war protests, the era that shaped modern American society and culture. During this period, one of the areas in which the most dramatic changes occurred was in the sphere of Civil Rights; Gettysburg was far from the forefront in dealing with bigotry, but it did confront the race issue. As this occurred on the national scale, efforts were made at Gettysburg to follow suit. Sadly, this was often difficult and unsuccessful, occurring "in fits and starts." During C. A. Hanson's tenure as president, minorities experienced discrimination as they pursued equal opportunities in education, faculty and administrators struggled to construct a successful strategy for integration, students brought down racial barriers through interaction, and above all, many African Americans demonstrated extraordinary strength of character in their fight for equality and acceptance into the Gettysburg College community. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

C. Arnold Hanson, Gettysburg College, college president, female students, African American students, Civil Rights Movement

*“The Minority Experience at Gettysburg College:
The Hanson Years (1961-1977)”*
Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson

The years of C. Arnold Hanson’s term as president at Gettysburg College were years of turbulence, change, and challenge. Rising to the position of president in 1961, in the dawning of a dynamic era of modern American history, C. A. Hanson served well into the middle of the next decade, during which time he helped guide Gettysburg College through some of its most trying and vital changes. This was the era of the hippie and the free thinker, the era of the Women’s and Civil Rights Movements, the era of Vietnam and anti-war protests, the era that shaped modern American society and culture. During this period, one of the areas in which the most dramatic changes occurred was in the sphere of Civil Rights; Gettysburg was far from the forefront in dealing with bigotry, but it did confront the race issue. As this occurred on the national scale, efforts were made at Gettysburg to follow suit. Sadly, this was often difficult and unsuccessful, occurring “in fits and starts.”¹⁵⁸ During C. A. Hanson’s tenure as president, minorities experienced discrimination as they pursued equal opportunities in education, faculty and administrators struggled to construct a successful strategy for integration, students brought down racial barriers through interaction, and above all, many African Americans demonstrated extraordinary strength of character in their fight for equality and acceptance into the Gettysburg College community.

During the Hanson era, diversity on campus was virtually nonexistent. According to Salvatore Ciolino, who arrived in 1971 as part of the financial aid department, “It was white, real

¹⁵⁸ Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson, Gettysburg, PA, April 28, 2011.

white.”¹⁵⁹ In the early 1970’s, the percentage of non-whites on campus was between 3% and 4%; this group comprised all minorities, including African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and so forth.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the number of African Americans on campus would have been even less than what these percentages reflect. Gwendolyn King, an African American student who graduated in 1975 with degrees in Biology and Religion, remembered an overwhelming experience she had because of this lack of diversity: “I looked to my left, I looked to my right, and all around me was a sea of white.”¹⁶¹ Other idioms capturing the lack of diversity on campus were “snow-white,” and “lily white.”¹⁶² Michael Ayers, another 1975 alumnus who obtained a degree in Business Administration, said there were between “fifteen and twenty [African American students] at most” during his four years at Gettysburg College.¹⁶³ Kirby Scott, a 1977 graduate who earned a degree in Health and Physical Education, estimated even lower numbers—between eleven and twelve African American students on campus; there were four other black students who graduated with him in his class.¹⁶⁴

This infinitesimal number of minorities on campus in the 1970’s however, pales in comparison to the lack of diversity in the 1960’s, when only eight African Americans graduated in the entire decade.¹⁶⁵ One of these eight, John Wilkerson, who was a Political Science major with a minor in history, recalled there being four blacks on campus when he graduated in 1962—one in each class.¹⁶⁶ Another of these eight, Bruce Gordon, recalls his arrival on campus in 1964

¹⁵⁹ Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Skye Montgomery, November 7, 2007, Oral History Collection, Gettysburg College Archives [hereafter referred to as GCA].

¹⁶⁰ Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, Gettysburg, PA, April 29, 2011.

¹⁶¹ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson, May 2, 2011.

¹⁶² Jim Pickering, interview by David Hedrick and Michael Birkner, March 13, 1995, Oral History Collection, GCA; Kenneth Mott, interview by Adele Walker, September 29, 1990, Oral History Collection, GCA.

¹⁶³ Michael Ayers, phone interview by Josh Poorman, May 1, 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Kirby Scott, phone interview by Josh Poorman, April 29, 2011.

¹⁶⁵ Bruce Gordon, interview in *Legacy: The Black Experience at Gettysburg*, film, GCA.

¹⁶⁶ John Wilkerson, phone interview by Josh Poorman, April 29, 2011.

as being particularly memorable. After walking into the Student Union building for registration, a person from admissions approached and greeted him, saying, “Hello Bruce Gordon, how was your trip from New Jersey?” At the time, Mr. Gordon wondered how the man had known his name. His friend Leland, who had accompanied him on the trip, enlightened him, saying, “My brother, you are in serious trouble now.” At that moment, it dawned on him that he was the only African American in his class.¹⁶⁷

When C.A. Hanson began his presidency in 1961, diversity must not have been a contentious issue, because there was none whatsoever.¹⁶⁸ Gettysburg College was a white campus. While the Hanson era progressed, the sheer lack of minorities on campus never surpassed 3 to 4%. What resulted from this was a severe challenge for minority students which the white majority would never fully understand.

One of the chief characteristics of an almost entirely white campus was students’ lack of empathy for their African American contemporaries. The lack of diversity on campus created a sense of ignorance and insensitivity to many issues concerning the minority experience. Essentially, the large part of the student body “was a cocoon,” isolated from many of the issues blacks had to deal with on a day to day basis. In spite of efforts to raise awareness about minorities with programs like the Knoxville Exchange in the 1960s and events hosted by the Black Student Union in the 1970s, “the majority just didn’t know and were apathetic.”¹⁶⁹ Much of this had to do with the similar demographics of many students on campus during the Hanson era; because almost everyone came from a similar background of white, middle or upper class,

¹⁶⁷ Bruce Gordon, *Legacy*.

¹⁶⁸ This is, in fact, exactly what Frank Williams says about diversity in the 1960s in an oral history conducted years later. For the exact quote, see Frank Williams, interview by Robert W. Johnston, November 3, 1993, Oral History Collection, GCA.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Biehn, interview by Tracy Schaal, October 30, 1993, Oral History Collection, GCA.

almost everyone shared similar viewpoints. As a result, people would argue about “shades of blue,” rather than arguing about “whether or not blue was a good color.”¹⁷⁰

Donald Tannenbaum noted that the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954 had taken a “long time to implement,” and as a result, many white students back then had come from “effectively segregated schools.”¹⁷¹ While the effectiveness of segregation in high schools diminished as the years went on, the fact that white students were not accustomed to living among, and interacting with black students is crucial to understanding the ignorance and insensitivity with which a large part of the campus community treated the minorities—those whose numbers were so small in the early years of the Hanson era they could be counted “on one hand.”¹⁷² In other words, it is not that the majority of white students were overt racists, but rather, they were naïve, insensitive, and often simply ignorant regarding the African Americans on campus. Having so few minority students on campus at any given time did not alleviate this high level of unawareness and insensitivity.

This lack of understanding and ignorance regarding the African American experience surfaced in many notable anecdotes of alumni. Kirby Scott, in an economics course on the first day of classes, recalled his professor asking him, “What are you?” Mr. Scott, who is half African American and half Native American, realized this professor was naïve and insensitive to what his words signified. It was not that this professor was purposely trying to be discriminative and racist towards Mr. Scott, but rather he lacked the understanding concerning his ethnicity and color, and the proper ways to approach the subject, because he had had so little experience and interactions with minority students on campus. In another instance, during a two-a-day football

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Donald Tannenbaum, interview by Edward Young, October 2, 1990, Oral History Collection, GCA.

¹⁷² Frank Williams, interview by Robert W. Johnston.

practice, Mr. Scott noticed a fellow teammate staring at him. After a little while, the teammate said to him, “You are the first black person I’ve ever met personally.”¹⁷³ Bruce Gordon, in a similar instance, recalled white students wanting to “touch [his] skin” and feel what his hair was like, because they had never seen a black person before.¹⁷⁴ Stories like these involving Kirby Scott and Bruce Gordon, who were very involved and active within the campus community, illustrate the severe level of ignorance on campus regarding African Americans.

For John Wilkerson, certain customs required of freshman were essential to the diminution of some of this insensitivity and ignorance. At the onset of their first year, students had to wear a small beanie on their heads (known as a dink) and also introduce themselves to everyone on campus. If a student wanted to be socially accepted, he or she could not afford to be shy. John Wilkerson certainly was not, and took full advantage of this freshman custom to introduce himself to everyone he could and talk with them briefly. He stressed that this not only helped him become known on a campus, where minority students could easily become isolated, but also helped assuage the fears of many white students, who were possibly encountering an African American for the first time in their lives.¹⁷⁵

On an interesting side note, this level of ignorance concerning minorities on campus surfaced in the College’s curriculum as well. John Wilkerson, while attending law school in Durham, North Carolina a few years after graduating from Gettysburg College in 1962, realized the “bias in the history teaching and books.” At that time, the history curriculum and assigned

¹⁷³ Kirby Scott, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

¹⁷⁴ Bruce Gordon, *Legacy*.

¹⁷⁵ John Wilkerson, phone interview by Josh Poorman. While students in the later years of Hanson’s presidency would have undoubtedly been accustomed to interacting with more African Americans than were present during John Wilkerson’s time on campus, the relevancy of his statement holds true throughout the whole of Hanson’s presidency. Even with more black students on campus, the fact remains that even into the seventies, many white students would not have had a lot of interactions with African Americans due to their often sheltered upbringings and lack of diversity on campus.

readings would have had little to say regarding minorities such as African Americans.¹⁷⁶

Insensitivity and marginalization of the black students on campus was expressed in many theatres, from the class rooms to social functions among students. This made it difficult, at best, to endure the typical strains of college life along with the feelings of being overlooked, pushed to the side, and dismissed as inferior.

It was not easy being an African American in Gettysburg in the 1960s and 1970s. There was still a whites-only barber shop in Gettysburg, black couples on dates were made to wait longer to be seated at local restaurants, and racial slurs were shouted from car windows at passing black students.¹⁷⁷ In one instance in 1973, Salvatore Ciolino was driving an African American student, Callon Halloway, to Carlisle, Pennsylvania for a conference, and the two stopped by for breakfast at a roadside diner in Biglerville. After twenty minutes of waiting, with no one coming to serve them or even bring them menus, Ciolino realized what was happening and ushered Halloway out of the restaurant.¹⁷⁸ Halloway did not understand why they had not been served, and wanted to wait longer, but once in the car again, Ciolino turned to him and explained “Cal, you’re black, and that’s why they’re not going to serve us.”¹⁷⁹

Despite these blatant acts of bigotry and discrimination in the outside community, discrimination on Gettysburg’s campus was more subtle, more covert, and in some cases, as

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* This side note greatly illustrates the prominence of consensus history, or traditional history which was present well into the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. However, John Wilkerson makes a note that the law school he attended in Durham, N.C. was different and thus brought to light the bias in Gettysburg’s curriculum. This change shows the gradual rise of social history, in which people who before did not have a voice and were essentially left out of consensus history began to have a presence in history books and history teachings. Wilkerson’s experience provides a living example of this. For an interesting examination of this change in the field of history, see Part 1 of Peter Charles Hoffer’s *Past Imperfect* (New York 2007).

¹⁷⁷ Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson; Bill Jones, interview in *Legacy: The Black Experience at Gettysburg*, film, GCA; Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, Gettysburg, PA, April 29, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, Gettysburg, PA, April 12, 2011.

¹⁷⁹ Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Skye Montgomery.

described by John Wilkerson, more muted.¹⁸⁰ Gwendolyn King, offered the phrase “micro aggressions against the soul” to describe this subtle discrimination on campus at the time.¹⁸¹ Another student, Leon “Buddy” Glover, of the Class of 1971, described the negative vibe he felt on campus sometimes as one of subtle hostility: “It wasn’t that they always threw out the expletives, but it was a feeling that they didn’t really want you here—it didn’t always have to be said.”¹⁸² Confederate flags hanging from dormitory windows demonstrated this racial undertone of insensitivity and bigotry.¹⁸³ Radical Right pamphlets were also circulated at Gettysburg College in the 1960s, including publications such as *The Augusta Courier* and *White Power- The Newspaper of White Revolution*, both of which were mouthpieces for the white supremacist movement. Other materials, such as *Forty Reasons for Segregation*, and propaganda promoting neo-fascism and accusing Martin Luther King Jr. of being a communist traitor were also circulated on campus.¹⁸⁴ C. A. Hanson’s papers also take note of substantial racial discrimination in the fraternities. His administration addressed this problem in 1966 by requiring all fraternities and sororities on campus to comply with an anti-discrimination statement pledging no more “categorical discrimination against any person because of color, race or creed”¹⁸⁵ On this front, advocacy for change also came from the bottom up. In an undated letter, ten students proposed various changes concerning the future of their campus. In the proposal, they urged the college to “actively investigate any discriminatory clauses,” which may be included in the Greek organizations’ by-laws.¹⁸⁶ Such passive discriminatory practices of bigotry as radical racist

¹⁸⁰ John Wilkerson, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

¹⁸¹ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

¹⁸² Leon Glover, interview in *Legacy: The Black Experience at Gettysburg*, film, GCA.

¹⁸³ Frank Williams, interview by Robert W. Johnston.

¹⁸⁴ Radical Pamphlets, Box 9, Folder 5, GCA.

¹⁸⁵ “Concerning a Statement of Non-Discriminatory Practices in Fraternities and Sororities on the Gettysburg College Campus,” April 16, 1974, C. A. Hanson Papers, Box 19, Folder 25, GCA.

¹⁸⁶ “Proposal from students concerned about the future of Gettysburg College,” undated, Papers of John W. Vannorsdall, Box 1, GCA. It is also important to note that in this proposal for change, these students examined

pamphlets, insensitivity, and racially based selectivity in Greek life remained a part of the Gettysburg student atmosphere regarding minorities on campus. With that being said, the response to minorities on campus was not always negative. There were, in fact, many examples of positive interactions between white and black students as well as constructive responses of white students in the face of exterior discrimination.

During his time at Gettysburg, John Wilkerson was rushed by the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity. When the members of this fraternity showed up at his door to ask him to rush, they had not realized he was an African American student, but accepted his pledge nonetheless. After he was accepted into the program, the national chapter of Alpha Chi Rho called the Gettysburg chapter's officers to double check that they were okay with accepting a black student. The officers defended their acceptance of Mr. Wilkerson and went on with their business. He did not find out this had occurred until much later. This specific case is a prime example of what Mr. Wilkerson referred to as "muted," discrimination, in which inequalities and acts such as these were hushed and not spoken of. Regardless, the equality defended by the Alpha Chi Rho officers was commendable, as the number of blacks in fraternities at that time was few and far between. John Wilkerson, interesting enough, went on to become pledge master of his fraternity his sophomore year, Vice President his junior year, and President his senior year, thus illustrating both his fortitude and the lack of discrimination regarding his color in the fraternity.¹⁸⁷

After Mr. Wilkerson had been accepted, the Inter-Fraternity Council scheduled a dinner at the Gettysburg Hotel for all members in Greek chapters; at that time, the Gettysburg Hotel

questions concerning the recruitment of minority groups and open and non-discriminatory housing for all minority groups. The 10 students who devised this proposal were: Charles Gubb, Richard Massey, Donna Schaper, Robert Schaper, Stephen J. Nelson, Beverly Eck, Howie Cepelak, Greg Gibson, Sherrie Hartland, and Mike Hobor.

¹⁸⁷ John Wilkerson, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

refused to serve blacks. Unbeknownst to him at the time, numerous students attending this dinner signed a petition stating that if Mr. Wilkerson was not served, they would not be served either. A similar stance was taken by the Cross Country team on its return trip from a meet at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. After having taken their seats at a buffet and not having been served, the members of the team realized it was because of Mr. Wilkerson's color. The student-athletes promptly left the buffet, causing no incident.¹⁸⁸

Raymond Lee, a graduate of the 1966 class, ran for treasurer of his class his freshman year. The morning after he had hung up campaign posters for this post, he found KKK writings in black marker over all of his posters. This was disturbing, but the student body's response merits acknowledgement. Outraged at this hurtful and ignorant act, students elected Raymond Lee to this post by a landslide vote. Furthermore, Mr. Lee was elected class treasurer for the remainder of his time at Gettysburg.¹⁸⁹ These incidents, while showing discrimination was very active in the community, also illustrated some of the honorable actions of students who made decisions based on fairness.

As the Hanson era progressed, faculty and administration became more aware of the question concerning the minority experience. They instituted various programs and through some controversial actions attempted to alleviate peoples' concerns about diversity on campus and improve the quality of minority students' time at Gettysburg College.

The Knoxville Exchange was one of the ways in which the administration of the college sought to overcome this close-mindedness and intolerance. Through this program, groups of Gettysburg students traveled to the all-black Knoxville College in Tennessee for a week long

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Raymond Lee, interview in *Legacy: The Black Experience at Gettysburg*, film, GCA.

immersion trip in the Spring semester in order to expand their views on race and encourage interracial dialogue. In turn, the partner college would send a group of its students to Gettysburg for a similar immersion experience, and even had a student come to study at Gettysburg for an entire semester.¹⁹⁰ Knoxville's Director of Development, Ralph Martin, was the first to approach Gettysburg with the suggestion of such an exchange program in November of 1967. Initially desiring the program to sponsor a trip of 25 students a semester, Ralph Martin negotiated with then Dean of the College, Basil Crapster, down to a more manageable number of seven to ten students per trip.¹⁹¹ Black students from the small school of Knoxville began travelling to Gettysburg as part of the exchange in 1968, where they stayed a week on campus.¹⁹² Dr. Kenneth Mott noted that it was a "novelty for black kids to be living down the hall" that served to promote more open-mindedness on the conservative campus.¹⁹³ President Hanson asked the young political science professor, Dr. Mott, to be the faculty advisor who would accompany the Gettysburg Students on their trip to Tennessee, and Mott recalls being "honored to be chosen to be involved with a worthwhile project" promoting diversity.¹⁹⁴ It was "designed for students to have conversation, experience, and firsthand knowledge of a black society" as noted in the *Gettysburgian* upon the return of eight students and Dr. Mott from Knoxville in the Fall of 1968.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Miss Yolanda Andrews, of Knoxville College, spent a Spring Semester at Gettysburg College furthering her studies as a Psychology major. For a photo and memo of her commemorating her time on campus see Hanson Papers, Box 29, Folder 20, GCA.

¹⁹¹ "Letter from C.A. Hanson to Ralph Martin of Knoxville College," Nov. 16, 1967, Box 29, Folder 20, GCA.

¹⁹² For a full schedule of activities for the Knoxville Students at Gettysburg, see the Papers of John W. Vannorsdall, Box 1.

¹⁹³ Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ "Eight K-ville Kids Return To G-Burg," *Gettysburgian*, November 22, 1968. The list of students who participated in this trip were also included in the article, and are: Barb Hough, Bob Carmany, Bonnie Chadwick, Pat Carr, Carol Hill, Joel Strawley, Jerry Morgart, Nancy Sellers, along with Prof. Kenneth Mott.

The program did have its drawbacks. For several semesters, concerns were voiced by faculty and administration as to the safety of the trip during the racially turbulent times of the late 1960s. The spring trip of 1969 was almost cancelled due to such concerns; the students were “forewarned of the possibility of receiving abuse, at least verbal, from black militants.”¹⁹⁶ Dr. Mott also recalled the danger of violence during the trip, learning on one venture to Knoxville of a white cab driver who had had his vehicle mobbed by black protesters and was then pulled from the cab as it was set on fire. The cab driver taking Dr. Mott from the airport to the Knoxville campus during this trip, in the winter of 1969, refused to drive onto school ground, and dropped the professor off two blocks away.¹⁹⁷ Despite these threats of danger, no problems ever materialized for the Gettysburg students, and many of the warnings seemed to be “exaggerated.”¹⁹⁸ The program only lasted for a few years and ended by 1970, as Gettysburg sought to bring diversity to the halls and dorms of its own campus instead of sending a handful of open-minded students hundreds of miles away to experience a multi-racial atmosphere.

In the 1969-1970 academic year, the administration recruited between thirty and sixty inner-city black students in attempt to enlarge the number of minorities on campus. This attempted increase was spurred by Outward Bound, a federal program which encouraged inner-city recruitment from Baltimore, Washington D.C., and New York; it was affiliated with the government’s efforts to enforce its affirmative action legislature.¹⁹⁹ Frank Williams, Dean of Students at the time, was a staunch supporter of this recruitment; however, during an informal announcement held before the start of the fall semester, it was evident many faculty members

¹⁹⁶ “K-ville Exchange Receives Positive ‘Burg Evaluations,” *Gettysburgian*, May 10, 1969.

¹⁹⁷ Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson.

¹⁹⁸ “K-ville Exchange Receives Positive ‘Burg Evaluations,” *Gettysburgian*.

¹⁹⁹ Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 29; Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson. There is some discrepancy as to the exact number of inner-city students brought to the campus. Michael Ayers believes the number to have been around forty.

were leery and skeptical of the program. Many were distressed that there was no set policy on how to deal with these students. For example, some professors were uncertain as to whether they were expected to grade these newly recruited inner-city students more lightly, in a “dual grading system,” or remain with the traditional grading style.²⁰⁰ These types of questions and ambiguity led to much confusion among faculty members and attributed to their overall unpreparedness when dealing with minority students in general.

Sadly, the large majority of these inner-city students ended up dropping out of college, as they were “not prepared,” both academically and socially.²⁰¹ Kirby Scott felt the college had “reached too far,” with this attempted recruitment, and believed “the college trying to diversify was counterproductive.” Gwendolyn King noted that “Gettysburg was not ready for black students; the support system was not in place.”²⁰² The students who came faced the “shock factor” of being in a completely foreign environment, whilst being confronted with an academic curriculum that demanded a high level of performance their high schools had not sufficiently prepared them for.²⁰³ Michael Ayers shared similar sentiments regarding this failed attempt, and believed the administration “just wanted the numbers.”²⁰⁴ The negative aspects of this failed attempt however, resonated long after these ill-prepared students left the college.

During an economics class which Michael Ayers was attending, the professor asked him if he knew how to read and write. This question caught the student off guard, and he talked to the professor after the class about it. He said that the professor had been accustomed, because of the inner-city recruitment program, to assuming black students did not know how to read and

²⁰⁰ Kenneth Mott, interview by Johnny Nelson.

²⁰¹ Salvatore Ciolino, interview with Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 29.

²⁰² Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

²⁰³ Kirby Scott, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

²⁰⁴ Michael Ayers, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

write. Michael Ayers stresses that the professor was trying to approach this answer in the best way he thought possible, as he had assumed he was part of this program. After learning of Mr. Ayers' academic preparedness and seeing that he performed well on the first exam, he was very supportive.²⁰⁵

Gwendolyn King related a similar anecdote, in which a security officer wrongly assumed she was one of the inner-city students who relied on financial aid. In this particular story, Ms. King was helping an older black student, who was moving from his dorm to an apartment, load his car. In the early 1970's, students on financial aid were not allowed to have cars on campus. The security officer, upon witnessing the two black students loading things into the car, approached them and said, "If you know what's good for you, I wouldn't get in that car." Ms. King was angered by the fact that this officer assumed they were "scholarship token blacks." She went to Dean [Frank] Williams office to report this officer, who assured her that he would be reprimanded. However, she never received an apology. Ms. King noted that, "If [she] had been a white student, he [the officer] would have been bending over backwards, bowing to [her] in apologies."²⁰⁶ What is evident from these two stories is that the perception of black students' capabilities and backgrounds on campus was severely lowered as a result of the failure of these unprepared inner-city students. Hence, in many instances minority students were unfairly treated and associated with a system of failure that had been initiated by a poorly planned administrative effort.

Despite the shortcomings of the inner-city recruitment program, active members of the college administration continued to try to find ways to increase diversity on campus and foster an

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

atmosphere favorable to minority students. In the summer of 1972, the college instituted a four-week summer transition program for minority students which had been implemented before at Bucknell University and Dickinson College. This program was intended to assist “differently prepared minority students” in preparation for their freshman year by providing courses and instruction aimed at improving expressive and analytical skills in the classroom and fostering an atmosphere outside the classroom “conducive to self-development.”²⁰⁷ The program, spearheaded by Sal Ciolino and Oliver Cato, selected twelve students to participate, of which eight chose to attend. There were two courses offered, an introductory English course and an Astronomy course.²⁰⁸ There was also an emphasis placed on the students’ abilities to “effectively use information and learning resources,” such as handbooks, dictionaries, and the library. Sal Ciolino stressed this aspect, as he believed many students had been ill-prepared in high school for such specific skill sets necessary at the college level.²⁰⁹

Apart from academic preparation in the classroom, the summer transition program also offered students informal instruction through tutoring and a weekly cultural program. Two African American tutor-counselors, Herbert Clinton and Shirley Waters, resided with the students in East and West Cottages, and offered support both academically and socially. Also, some faculty and administrators, such as Elaine Jones and Jim Pickering, offered their time as tutors for this program. In an attempt to better acquaint these minority students with their

²⁰⁷ “Summer Transition Program”, Hanson Papers, Box 43, Folder 30, GCA.

²⁰⁸ The two specific courses offered were English S100: Textual Analysis and Expository Writing and an astronomy course titled, “The Structure of the Universe.” By 1974, a third course, focusing on aspects of sociology and anthropology, was also offered. CITE summer transition program

²⁰⁹ “Summer Transition Program,” Hanson Papers, GCA; Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 29.

environment and foster lasting friendships, each week the students would “meet, discuss, and vote on the [cultural] activity they preferred to attend for the week.”²¹⁰

From the students’ point of view, the most beneficial aspect of this transitional program was the “opportunity to meet people, acquaint themselves with the campus, and better understand college life.” One particular student, in a letter written to Elaine Jones, expressed his conviction that his time in this program was “the most interesting 4 weeks of [his] life.” In this letter, the student explains his internal confliction over whether to attend Temple University to play football (and pay virtually nothing), or to attend Gettysburg College. He told Mrs. Jones that if he hadn’t been exposed to those four-weeks from July 30 to August 26, he would have attended Temple. He says that what brought him back was “the fact that people were willing to give up their time so that we would be given a head start in September.”²¹¹

By 1975, because so few African Americans were attending the college, the budget for the program was cut and it ended, having “too few to justify doing it.”²¹² However, the impact it had on the students it did affect was significant; not only did they gain much preparation academically, they gained a support system of both faculty and friends that helped bolster their fortitude throughout the transition and afterwards.

Another way in which a support system for minority students was pursued was through the concerted effort by the administration, starting in the early 1970s, to hire African Americans as staff members. One of the first African Americans to gain a post in the administration was

²¹⁰ In 1972, the four activities the students selected were horseback riding at Charnita stables, Fiddler on the Roof at Allenberry Playhouse, a picnic at the Narrows, and an all-black opera at Wolf Trap Farm. “Final Evaluation: Summer Transition Program,” Hanson Papers, Box 43, Folder 30, GCA.

²¹¹ “Letter written in September 1972 by a Summer Transition Program Student,” Hanson Papers, Box 43, Folder 30, GCA.

²¹² Salvatore Ciolino, interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 29.

Preston Winkler, who served as Assistant Dean of the College. Salvatore Ciolino, one of the proponents of hiring more minority staff, was responsible for bringing another young man, Oliver Wendell Cato, onto the Gettysburg campus to join Ciolino in Admissions.

Cato fulfilled the ideal of what many felt a necessary measure of any support system for African Americans on campus. Along with his duties as an admissions counselor in the years of 1971-1973, Cato also served as an advisor to the Black Student Union²¹³ and worked with the Community Action Agency in its Housing Discrimination program.²¹⁴ Cato served as a role model and as a support to black students on campus in the transition period of the early 70s, and after serving his time at Gettysburg and going on to law school, left with the belief that “a black community could now think of taking root in Gettysburg College.” He did, however, in his letter of resignation, recommend to President Hanson the continuation of the policy to hire more African Americans on his staff, calling for “decisive moves... to hire additional black personnel.”²¹⁵

This advice was heeded, especially in the case of Elwyn Rawlings, who was hired by the college in 1974 as the Associate Chaplain. With the heartfelt request of the college chaplain, John Vannorsdall, the young black Lutheran chaplain from Howard University was recommended by the Lutheran Church of America to serve as part time counselor, chaplain and

²¹³ Oliver Wendell Cato, “Letter of Resignation,” Hanson Papers, Box 7, Folder 7, GCA.

²¹⁴ An interesting side note on this effort on the part of Oliver W. Cato is that he himself had been discriminated against when first seeking housing in Gettysburg. Salvatore Ciolino tells the story of calling up a land lady in town to inquire about an apartment up for rent, on behalf of Cato. The lady tells him that it is available to come down later to arrange everything. Upon arriving at the apartment, along with Cato and then Dean Jim Pickering, the landlady realizes that one of the men is black, at which point she asked which one of them the apartment would be for. When Cato acknowledges his intent to rent the apartment, the woman promptly informs the three men that it had just been taken by another renter. Realizing the motive of this lie, Jim Pickering became indignant at the blatant bigotry, but at Ciolino’s urging, the three let the matter rest and left. Salvatore Ciolino notes that the woman was notorious for overtly not renting to blacks.

²¹⁵ Oliver Cato, “Letter of Resignation.”

under the title of Associate of Minority Affairs at Gettysburg College, working closely with both the Chaplain's Office and the Office of the Dean of the College—at the time, it was a fellow African American administrator, Preston Winkler.²¹⁶ Reverend Vannorsdall felt that having a black chaplain and counselor on campus at least one day a week “would be a significant help to the whole campus community, and especially to our black students.”²¹⁷ Vannorsdall noted that President Hanson himself was also very “enthusiastic” about the prospects of the new hire.

All the hopes of Vannorsdall and Hanson bore fruit in Elwyn Rawlings. Serving as the unofficial liaison and counselor to the black community on campus, his presence was felt significantly by the black students. Gwendolyn King, a senior when Rawlings arrived, remembered him despite only interacting with him for one brief year. She recalled that he was “always available to have a conversation with the students,” and acknowledged that the black community on campus at the time needed that support from someone in the academic system but at the same time, one of their own—a young black man who could relate to them in their daily struggles.²¹⁸ This was a step towards the support system envisioned by administrators and personnel like Ciolino, Cato, and Vannorsdall. The strategy of hiring minority personnel in the early 1970s was one of the best executed and most rewarding measures taken in the steps toward making Gettysburg College a more agreeable atmosphere for minority students during the Hanson Era.

Early in President C. A. Hanson's tenure at the helm, a difficult situation arose which he addressed in a very progressive and enlightened way. A wealthy alumnus of the college from Baltimore, Maryland, died and left a large sum of his estate to go into a scholarship fund to be

²¹⁶ “Minority Affairs,” Hanson Papers, Box 40, Folder 6, GCA.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

awarded to four students every year, and to be administered by the two banks in town at the time. The only qualification to receive this scholarship was that the recipients had to be white males. Faced with the offer of this large sum of money at the cost of agreeing to the terms, Hanson refused the scholarship, stating that it was discriminatory and therefore not in adherence to the principles of Gettysburg College. A court case ensued, in which the Hanson Administration tried to remove the discriminatory stipulations and receive the money. The judge of Adams County refused to hear the case on the grounds that the Civil Rights Act had not been in place at the time the man's will was written. The case was then heard in Franklin County where the judge ruled in favor of the man's right to do with his money as he pleased. Hanson refused to take the money on these terms and the funds were put into the bank until the 1970s, when the lawyer of the estate finally gave in to Hanson's wishes, gave over the money and removed the stipulations. Hanson held firm in this instance and demonstrated his resolve to make Gettysburg College a fair and open-minded liberal arts institution, dedicated to equality.²¹⁹

Awareness concerning blacks on campus gradually increased as the years of the Hanson era progressed. While only a small number of students made efforts to befriend black students on campus and engage in other activities promoting equality, these efforts did bring about positive changes throughout the community.

In 1968, the Chapel and Dean's Office combined efforts to organize a trip to Harlem, New York, where 20 students and 14 faculty members and administrators spent time over their Spring Break. One student attendee, describing the trip as a "learning experience," said it gave

²¹⁹ Salvatore Ciolino, by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 12. The details of this case are slightly foggy, seeing that it was not in Mr. Ciolino's place to give specific names of players or banks involved, and that the whole affair was kept relatively private throughout the proceedings, for obvious reasons.

her a “sudden realization of individual responsibility,” and made her, “at least slightly more aware,” to minority problems and difficulties.²²⁰

In 1969, the Chapel sponsored a similar trip to New York which sent 12 eager students to visit places such as a Harlem prep school and the Minisink Town House.²²¹ After returning, these students wrote to the Hanson administration and promoted various aspects of change on Gettysburg’s campus concerning the minority experience. They sought to transform the “basically homogenous atmosphere,” through measures such as hiring a black recruiter, increasing black enrollment, and adding courses in various departments on Black American studies and African studies.²²²

In an effort to advocate solidarity, after Martin Luther King was killed in April 1968, 200 to 300 white students organized a silent march to the battlefield’s Peace Light in response to this atrocious act, maintaining a belief “in the ideals of equality and brotherhood for all people.”²²³ Efforts to promote an African American voice on campus were answered through the Black Awareness newsletter, which contained articles, poems, black artist songs, and other things to serve as a “social commentary” and an advocate of black culture on campus.²²⁴ There was a quasi-Islam sect on campus, known as the *5 Percenters*, which asserted black power and black

²²⁰ Robbi Weisel, “Provocative Problem,” *Gettysburgian*, April 5, 1968.

²²¹ Mark Peterson, “Group Visits New York: Explores Inner-City Life,” *Gettysburgian*, February 7, 1969.

²²² “Prospectus on Change,” Papers of John W. Vannorsdall, Box 1, GCA. It seems the suggestion concerning a black recruiter was answered in 1971, when the college hired Oliver Cato as admissions officer; the level of influence this particular group of students had remains unknown. The 12 students who attended the 1969 New York trip were: Richard M. Davidson, Kathleen M. Lynch, Carol E. McCarty, Edson E. Whitney, Robbi Weisel, Elisabeth Hoffman, Beth Wiseman, Jo Landfair, Karen Burdack, Louise Bergstresser, Mark Wiseman, and Susan Gutzat.

²²³ “Advertisement for the Silent March to the Peace Light,” Papers of John W. Vannorsdale, Box 1, GCA; Frank Williams, interview by Robert W. Johnston.

²²⁴ Ed. Buddy Glover, *Black Awareness: As Salaam Alakaim*, Student Protest Publications, Box 1, GCA.

independence in an almost “aggressive” manner.²²⁵ Michael Ayers noted that this small group gave him a hard time because he was on the football team, and thus conforming to the white society and not asserting black independence. Ayers notes he almost had as much of a problem with them as he did with other things done by white students.²²⁶

In 1970, a three-day Symposium was held at the college in which faculty, students, and numerous “liberal and radical speakers” attended to address contemporary issues and concerns regarding both the campus and in a broader sense, the nation. Frank Williams described the Symposium as a, “very, very intense several days,” which provided an “unusual experience” for Gettysburg College by illuminating issues such as minority enrollment within the campus community.²²⁷

Another way African Americans showed initiative in their interaction with the greater Gettysburg community was by creating the Black Student Union in 1972. With the goals to “create a sense of awareness to African American students on campus and to establish a more favorable climate” in mind, the founders established this group as an inter-student support group which also gave them a voice with the administration and overall campus community.²²⁸ One of the main ways the Black Student Union influenced the campus was by bringing in black entertainment and sponsoring an annual Black American Arts Festival. Entertainers like Dick Gregory, a black comedian and social critic, and the Muddy Waters Blues Band, performed at the college.²²⁹ Another way in which the Black Student Union, or BSU, was beneficial on campus was that it served as a support mechanism, a stronghold and a shelter for those African

²²⁵ Salvatore Ciolino, phone interview by Josh Poorman and Johnny Nelson, April 12.

²²⁶ Michael Ayers, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

²²⁷ “Camelot’s Not,” *Gettysburgian*, October 3, 1969; Frank Williams, interview by Jennifer Epstein, September 27, 2011, Oral History Collection, GCA.

²²⁸ Anna Jane Moyer, *To Waken Fond Memory*, (Gettysburg College, PA: 2006.) 166.

²²⁹ Michael Ayers, phone interview by Josh Poorman; Spectrum, 1973; Moyer, *Fond Memory*.

American students who felt overwhelmed in the very white atmosphere of Gettysburg College. When new students arrived on campus, the BSU threw a welcoming party to ease the transition for incoming black freshmen. When Gwendolyn King felt overwhelmed by the “sea of white” around her, it was the Black Student Union where she went to feel at ease. She recalls that it was a rare moment to be in a classroom at any time with another black student, so it was through the social setting of the BSU that young African Americans found the avenue to come together and build up one another’s resolve. King sums the feeling of fellowship and strengthening up in one sentence when she explains that although she had many white friends, sometimes, she “just needed to be with folks who looked like me.”²³⁰

This need for social interaction and fellowship was not unique to black student groups, but the importance of social and extra-curricular activities in the broader sense of the campus were also vital in the success of a minority African American student at Gettysburg College during the 1960s and 70s. Every African American alumnus interviewed talked explicitly about the importance of involvement in their conversations. John Wilkerson, Class of ’62, was involved with the Chapel Choir for two years, and ran both Track and Field and Cross Country while at Gettysburg. He was a member of Alpha Chi Rho fraternity and participated in the Air Force ROTC program, which he felt gave him “a form of camaraderie.”²³¹ He acknowledged that it was difficult being one of only a handful of blacks on campus at the time but he emphasized that it was his involvement in extra-curricular activities that enable to become a part of the college community.

²³⁰ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

²³¹ John Wilkerson, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

Kirby Scott, like Wilkerson, was also involved in the Air Force ROTC program and Track and Field. He was involved in Greek life on campus, becoming a brother at Tau Kappa Epsilon and also noting that although he was an African American he was welcome at Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He also stressed the importance of this social interaction as easing his experience at Gettysburg, saying “you needed to get involved, you were only limiting yourself more by not getting involved socially.”²³²

Michael Ayers served as the treasurer of the Black Student Union and was also a member ROTC. He found support and strength in the football team and his coach, Eugene Haas. He found acceptance on the football field, where the color of one’s skin was not as important as his abilities to play and compete.²³³ Bruce Gordon was also involved in football at Gettysburg, and an African American alumna from the early 1970s, Cheryl Walker, was captain of the Gettysburg Cheerleading Squad.²³⁴ Gwendolyn King was the treasurer of her class, in the Chapel Choir, and was one of the first African American women to pledge a sorority, joining Delta Gamma. King felt “being social helped me be known” and remembered having many white friends because of all the activities she was involved in.²³⁵ All these examples give credence to the assertion that the more involved the minority students were in social and extra-curricular activities on campus, the easier it was for them to be incorporated into the Gettysburg community.

Along with this social involvement and activism, a less tangible element was needed to get the African American students through the trials that came with being a minority on campus

²³² Kirby Scott, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

²³³ Michael Ayers, phone interview by Josh Poorman.

²³⁴ Bruce Gordon, *Legacy*; Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

²³⁵ Gwendolyn King, phone interview by Johnny Nelson.

at that time—the qualities of courage and strength and character. It took something within the individual to push through the discrimination, the minority feeling, the subtle bigotry and the loneliness that came with being a black student at Gettysburg. Bruce Gordon found inner strength by being proud of who he was, and came to appreciate the important values of difference and diversity.²³⁶ Bill Jones, a counselor at the college, noted that “it took some people who were strong and courageous to deal with all that.”²³⁷ In a world where they were constantly surrounded by people who were not like them, where they were discriminated against on campus and exposed to racism in the outer community, it all came down to personal strength of character and determination.

Gwendolyn King found her inner strength by visiting the nearby battlefield with her bike. There, she would gaze across the fields dotted with cannon and lined with split rail fences and reflect upon the moving story of the battle, the actions of the men who fought on that hallowed ground and what relevance that had on her personally. She recalled thinking that “folks fought here and died, so that me and my ancestors could have a better way of life.”²³⁸ This was one of her ways of finding that inner strength and courage with which she could face the trials and difficulties of the college experience. She remembers her time at Gettysburg with satisfaction, saying: “I’m proud of my education at Gettysburg, but it didn’t come free. That’s for sure.”²³⁹

This pride and satisfaction was something almost universally expressed by those African Americans that strove to pursue their education at Gettysburg and graduated from the college during the Hanson Era. Though they were relatively few, and though their experiences included

²³⁶ Bruce Gordon, *Legacy*.

²³⁷ Bill Jones, *Legacy*.

²³⁸ Gwendolyn King, interview by Johnny Nelson.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

many accounts of discrimination, maltreatment, ignorance, bigotry, and marginalization, they were able to overcome all through personal strength of character and support from their fellow students, faculty, and administrators. On a campus where the vast majority of students and faculty were white, and many were close-minded or ignorant towards minorities, as John Wilkerson noted, it “took a unique person of color” to surmount these incredible odds.²⁴⁰ Those that did were proud of their accomplishments and enjoyed their experience as they found a way into the Gettysburg community. Throughout the Hanson presidency, as the issue of Civil Rights became a real part of Gettysburg life, faculty and administration worked towards a more effective policy concerning minorities and minority growth, black and white students worked toward progress in integration even as discrimination and bigotry still plagued the college, and the individuals themselves demonstrated uncommon strength and fortitude in their pursuit for their rightful place as equal members in the community of Gettysburg College.

²⁴⁰ John Wilkerson, interview by Josh Poorman.