

BLACK WILLIAMS: A WRITTEN HISTORY

WILLIAMS COLLEGE BLACK STUDENT UNION

## INTRODUCTION

“In order to know where you are going, you must know where you came from.”

It was that very belief that raised questions in the minds of Williams Black Student Union board members in the spring of 2002. The BSU board in 2002–2003 was composed mainly of freshmen who hadn’t yet been acquainted with the oral history of the BSU. This realization led the board to seek out information about the history of the BSU that could be passed on to incoming freshmen and also be made available to all its members. The fact that the history is so rich—and turbulent—further necessitated the writing of this history.

However, the search for information in the likeliest places proved futile: there was no summary record of the BSU available. Therefore, that spring the BSU decided to create a complete history of the Union that would include all of the events that led to its creation, the events that led to the acquisition of Rice House, and, as nearly as possible, all that has happened on campus since the creation of the Union that affected its membership.

This idea was submitted to Prof. Tess Chakalakal for her evaluation and advice in the summer of 2002. She suggested that we elaborate on an already solid foundation. Not only was there a need for a record of the rich history of the BSU, she said, but also of the blacks who attended Williams: a written, accessible history of Williams’ illustrious black graduates would not only inform current students but would attract prospective students—especially black students—to Williams.

In order to tackle this project, the BSU board proposed a Winter Study 099 titled “Black Williams: A Written History.” With the exception of its two freshman members, the entire BSU board participated in the project. Six general members of the Union also participated in the work.

## CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY YEARS

Forty-one years after Williams College opened its doors, the Philotechnian Literary Society held a debate that concluded that “people of colour” should not be admitted to “the colleges of New England.” The details of the arguments offered are unknown, but the result of the debate is not surprising. The students who attended Williams in 1834 would have been more than progressive if they had suggested that black men were capable of competing at their academic level. The question was not irrelevant, however, since more than a decade earlier, in 1823, Middlebury College had graduated its first black student, Alexander Lucius Twilight.

In his *History of Williams College*, Leverett Spring claims that, shortly after the 1834 debate, the legendary Lucy Terry Prince brought her son to Williamstown in an attempt to have him enrolled. Unfortunately, this story has been relegated to the level of myth: not only are historians unable to verify its accuracy, but the accounts that survive vary in time by as much as forty years. The significance of the myth, however, deserves mention, as the alleged refusal of her petition may have discouraged others from applying to Williams, especially if there were other colleges in New England that were already matriculating black men.

Although it is safe to say that Williams did not invest itself in the concept of the educated black man, men of Williams were not completely unfamiliar with his plight: Professor Chester Dewey orchestrated the establishment, in 1823, of Massachusetts’ first anti-slavery society. Eight years later, in 1831, William Lloyd Garrison became the first publisher of *The Liberator*.

Williams remained an institution for white males until the fall of 1885, when Gaius Charles Bolin of Poughkeepsie, New York entered the college just before his twenty-first birthday. Prior to his matriculation, he attended Leslies Preparatory and Classical School. Bolin’s decision to attend Williams was influenced by Leslies’ principal, who was familiar with Williams. Bolin’s claim that he came to Williams “to make me a man” was mocked by his class book editor, who pointed out that Bolin’s father picked the school for him. Bolin was not the only non-white student to come to Williams that year. Boon Itt, originally of Bangkok, Siam was also a member of the class

of 1889. The admission of the first black student did not, apparently, warrant commentary in any of the school's periodicals or in its newspaper (the *Williams Weekly* being the chief source of news at that time). However, the *Springfield Republican*, in a piece titled "Literary Anniversaries: Williams College, the Election of Trustees," commented on the prospects of a large class for the upcoming semester: "Over 50 have already been admitted. Among these is a colored boy who will be the first Negro to attend this college." Aside from this mention, and the fact that Bolin resided with a black family, the Dunsetts, during his first year at Williams, one would need no verification of photographs of him to prove that Gaius Bolin was indeed black. The only time that the *Williams Weekly* mentioned Bolin's name was when he performed well in football or when he was part of his class's tug-o-war team. Bolin's own recollections of his time at Williams reveal no disgruntled feelings. In a letter to Dennis Dickerson in 1978, Bolin's daughter, the Honorable Jane E. Bolin, recounted that her father told stories of having to "get up in the black cold of winter to make fires in the rooms and of how he had to break ice in the washbowl in order to wash." It is therefore safe to assume that Bolin was one of the two men in his class who had to work in order to support himself while at Williams.

Although these accounts are largely taken from reunion reports, in which people mostly attempt to glorify their experiences at their alma mater, the fact that subsequent generations of Bolinses attended Williams testifies to the good experience of Gaius Bolin. Like most of the black men who attended Williams in the nineteenth century, Bolin played football as a member of the Williams Eleven for his entire college career. In his senior year he was selected by his classmates to speak at Class Day exercises as the "pipe orator." The Fifty Year Report for the class of 1889 includes a particularly illuminating note from Bolin to class secretary Edwin Andrews. In the note, Bolin describes the quarters he shared with his brother at No. 3 South College as a regular meeting place for other students, including Andrews. It appears that Bolin did not perceive himself as being ostracized in any way at Williams. Furthermore, his acceptance into almost every facet of life at Williams proves that, by all accounts, his experience was both exceptional and enjoyable.

After graduation, Bolin spent some time working in his father's produce business in Poughkeepsie. He also studied law with a local attorney, Fred E. Ackerman, and after two years he passed the Dutchess County bar exam on his first try. In 1895 he left Ackerman's firm to set up on his own and successfully built his clientele as a general practitioner in Poughkeepsie. On 14 September 1899 Bolin married Matilda Ingraham Emery. Their first child, Anna Amy, was born on New Years' Eve, 1900, but died almost immediately. Their other children, Gaius, Jr., Ivy Rosalind, and Jane Matilda, were born in 1902, 1904, and 1908, respectively.

In 1900, New York governor Theodore Roosevelt nominated Bolin for the Board of Managers of the 1901 Pan American Exposition, even though Bolin had written to Roosevelt to put forward the nomination of Charles W. Anderson, a black politician. As a result of his service for the Exposition, Bolin was declared a member for life of the Buffalo Historical Society, and thereafter maintained his political alliance with Roosevelt. Unfortunately, his wife Matilda died in 1917 and Bolin was left to raise three children. In 1931, his daughter Ivy formed the Dutchess County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Bolin was instrumental in forming its Poughkeepsie branch. He was named head of the Dutchess County Bar Association in 1945, a position he held until his death.

Bolin died in Poughkeepsie on 16 April 1946. He is survived by his son, Gaius, Jr., and his daughter, Jane.

The second black man to attend Williams was Gaius's brother, Livingsworth Wilson Bolin, who entered Williams a year after his brother. Scheduled to graduate in 1890, Livingsworth left the college one semester after Gaius graduated. Although the reasons for Livingsworth's departure are unknown, it is clear that he was neither as enthusiastic as Gaius about his time at Williams, nor as popular. He was the first of Williams' black men to decide not to complete his course of study, and because of that he is important. Whereas Gaius was the picture of contentment at Williams, Livingsworth's experience was apparently quite different. Livingsworth did not make enough of an impression on his classmates to be mentioned in any of the school's publications. He was

not an athlete (or a fan of athletics, as Gaius was) and Gaius does not mention him in any of his accounts of his time at Williams, even though Livingsworth was his roommate. It was not until 1935 that secretary of the class of 1890 Christopher L. Ward began to make inquiries into his whereabouts in order to put him in the alumni registry after 45 years of omission.

In his research on Gaius, assistant professor of history Dennis Dickerson came across the only information available about Livingsworth: “In 1894 he and a partner opened a Poughkeepsie insurance and real estate business. By 1903 this enterprise had failed, and he had taken a custodial position. Livingsworth was an active participant in political and religious affairs during these years. In 1908 he served on the Executive Committee of Poughkeepsie’s Coloured Men Taft and Sherman Club.” Livingsworth died in 1946 in New York City, where he had moved with his wife in 1910 to work at a real estate agency.

Three years after Gaius Bolin came to Williams, George Morton Lightfoot entered with the class of 1891, transferring to Williams after a year at Howard University. He was very much influenced by his grammar school teacher, a Williams graduate, in his hometown of Culpepper in Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains. Lightfoot was the only black student at Williams when Livingsworth left in 1889. He had a fairly uneventful three years at Williams but graduated with an outstanding record. Immediately following graduation he was offered a teaching position in the preparatory division of Howard University, and in 1912 was appointed to a professorship in Latin which he held until his death. He received his masters’ degree in art from the Catholic University in 1922 and his thesis, “The Question of the Origin of Human Satire,” is referenced to this day by classics students at his alma mater. His publications included “The Latin Element in English Speech,” “Virgil Through the Ages,” “The Function of Language in Higher Education,” “The Classics in the College Course,” and “Christianity in the Roman Empire.” Lightfoot was director of the university’s summer sessions from 1925 to 1932. Theodore Roosevelt, after he became president, recognized Lightfoot’s work and appointed him to the National Committee on the Virgilian Celebration in 1930. Lightfoot was married to Susie

Tirey in July 1917 and fathered three children, George, Jr., James, and Dolores. He died on Christmas day in 1947—the eve of his seventy-ninth birthday—while teaching his granddaughter the Williams song.

In the fall of 1890 the Williams campus was graced with the brilliance of Edward E. Wilson, who not only was the first black man to graduate Phi Beta Kappa but who graduated after only two years, at age twenty-three. He earned a law degree from Howard University in 1894. In 1902 he was hired by a classmate from Williams, state attorney Maclay Hoyne, and continued to work in the state attorney's office for 35 years. He was in charge of the cases in appeal in the appellate, state, and supreme courts for Cook County. He retired in 1947 and died on 21 February 1952 while vacationing in France.

In the fall of 1891, Williams' first African student was enrolled. Thomas Edward Besolow is categorized as a "partial" student as he had to leave school in December of his freshman year due to illness. He returned a year later and was in residence for only a year. Much controversy surrounded Besolow. It was rumored that he was an African prince, and indeed was nicknamed "Prince Besolow" and the "African Prince" by his classmates. Some time after his departure from Williams, a book by Thomas Edward Besolow appeared, but apparently it did not deal in matters of African history.

In 1901, Williams president Franklin Carter received a document titled "A Declaration of the King John Kie Gray and Others to Bey of Solow in the Lawful Ownership of Cape Mount and the Vey Countries and Gallinas Countries on the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of January 1900." Two native chiefs and sub-chiefs, and ten other people, were signatory to the document. It reads:

"Know All Men by these presents which we the undersigned Chiefs and Sub Chiefs do solemnly swear, state and affirm that the holder and the bearer of this document commonly know as Bey of Solow is the true and lawful descendant and son of King John Dumah known by the Spanish, French, and English Governments and the American Colonization Society as King Peter. We also must solemnly swear state and affirm that the holder of this document



commonly known as Bey of Solow is the true and lawful descendant of a very long line of true and lawful Kings and Princes and the Chiefs of this part of the West Coast of Africa and is consequently with his people the Principal true and lawful owners [sic] of the soils and Towns of the Vey Connie and Gallinas Countries having among other towns for his true and lawful inheritance such places as Bendo Gorroh (etc.) and that as a matter of fact in their days only two Kings were acknowledged as such in these parts namely King Peter or King Duman and King Scheakkar of Gindmah and that the said Vey and Connie Countries is alleged today to form a portion of the Republic of Liberia.

In token of this We King John Kie Gray etc. have hereunto set out marks to our names this first day of January in the year of Grace One Thousand Nine Hundred at Gorroh and Robertsport in Grand Cape Mount in the Republic of Liberia.

Thomas Edward Besolow was not heard from again until he sent a letter to Williams president Harry A. Garfield in 1923 saying that he had resided in Monrovia, Liberia since 1896. He went on to say that he had taught in a mission school and at Liberia College for 10 years before being elected to the Liberian legislature. Subsequently he had been elected senator for that state. In 1922 he had been appointed to the bench of the supreme court of the president of Liberia. In closing, he offered his services to Williams' students and promised to visit the campus in May of 1924. There is evidence to show that he kept his promise.

In 1893 John Arthur Miller transferred from Howard University to Williams. Born in Portsmouth, Virginia on 6 May 1871, Miller seemed to be fairly active at Williams but was not ardent about communicating with his class secretary. His fondness for biology and anatomy, and his intention to pursue a post-graduate course in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, are evident from entries in his class book. But according to Williams' sources the first black doctor to graduate from Williams was Harrison Morgan

Brown; therefore it can be assumed that Miller did not achieve his goal. At Williams, Miller served on the executive committee of the Chemical Club and was a member of the Philotechnian Literary Society. How or when he died has not been determined.

Two black freshmen, William Smith Deyo and John Russell Ward, also entered Williams in 1893 and shared a room for a year, after which time both men left school. There is no indication as to why they left, but their departures brought the number of black non-graduates to four (out of a total of eight students). One may assume that there were aspects of life at Williams that were unfriendly to the Negro. Deyo attended Amherst College after leaving Williams and was said to have been a private secretary at the *Albany Evening Journal* when his class graduated. Ward became a reporter for the *Waltham Daily News* after leaving Williams.

The year that John Miller graduated from Williams, two black freshmen entered by way of Phillips Andover Academy: Harrison Morgan Brown and George Montgomery Chadwell were members of the class of 1900. By all accounts, Chadwell was better liked than any black man who had had the privilege to attend Williams. Brown hailed from Winchester, Virginia. He became a member of the Chemical Society, the Lyceum of Natural History, and the Press and Andover Clubs. While not as popular as his roommate, he was an avid reader and a good student and has been described as an authority on modern fiction. Harrison Brown became the first of many black doctors produced by Williams. The Harrison Morgan Brown Premedical Society was founded in honor of his achievement:

The Harrison Morgan Brown Society, named after the first African-American Williams alumnus to receive an M.D., was originally an organization for supporting black premed students. In recent years, the Society has broadened its focus to promote campus dialogue on a broad range of issues relating to health and the profession of medicine. Our organization is open to anyone (even non-premeds) who has an interest in health care.

Brown received his M.D. from the Medical College of Western University (now called the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine) in 1904. His brother, James E. Brown, later became a urologist on the staff of the university. Harrison Brown practiced medicine in Pittsburgh for 31 years and specialized in internal medicine although, according to his sister Sara, “he never relinquished wholly his general practice.” Brown belonged to the American Medical Association and was a valued member of the Allegheny County Medical Society. His community called him “Doctor Harry” in order to distinguish him from his brother James, who also practiced in the area.

Sara Brown says that Harrison Brown “devoted the greater part of his time and skill to unremunerated service for the poorer classes, spending his life and health in the service of humanity ... His civic work and his philanthropy consumed his time and his meager earnings, but he was shy and almost secretive as to his charities. Much of it has come to light since his death.” Brown never married. He died suddenly at home after a typical full day of work on 26 October 1935.

George Montgomery Chadwell—or Chad, as he was often called—was a native of Lee, Massachusetts, and therefore the first of the earliest black graduates of Williams to come from the New England area. Chadwell entered Williams at 21 and was about three years older than most of the men in his class. The difference in age, and his natural affability, may have been contributing factors to the respect—even reverence—he garnered from those around him. Chadwell came to Williams with a reputation as an outstanding football player, and also ran track in his freshman year. The impression he made on his classmates is evident in the honors they bestowed upon him. In his freshman year he was on the Shirt-Tail Parade committee; as a sophomore he was named class president. He served as secretary and vice-president of the Andover Club, was elected to the Gargoyle Society in his junior year, and as a senior became the business manager of *Lit.* and was made part of the Class Day committee. Chadwell chose to live in Williamstown but tragically died soon after graduation. After Chadwell and Brown graduated, Williams did not enroll another black student for four years.

There was another black presence on the Williams campus during the years in which these gentlemen graced the halls of Williams—a local character named Abe Bunter. Within the highly esteemed atmosphere of academia, the black men of Williams were compared—in their minds as well as in the minds of their classmates—to Bunter, a man whom Gaius Bolin called a freak from the hills. As with the details of many country characters who become legends, Bunter’s age was unknown and his notoriety was based on an absurd gift: he was said to have been “blessed” with a skull so thick that he could break anything by striking it with his forehead. “Abe had been a slave transferred from the South, where his reputation for strength was known the length and breadth of Old Virginia. Note the protruberance of his forehead. It is inches thick and Abe used to slay his master’s bullocks by the simple method of seizing them by the horns and promptly butting them into oblivion.”

The overt (if rough) symbolism of using one’s cranium as a weapon cannot go unremarked. Abe Bunter and the black graduates of Williams shared this primary objective, and one hundred years later it has not changed. Using one’s intelligence to direct the fate of the race is a charge that many take on, consciously or otherwise. In saluting the first black men to attend Williams it is only right to acknowledge Abe Bunter and the complexity and momentum with which he invigorates the history of black Williams.

## CHAPTER 2: ENTERING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Between the years 1904 and 1912, Williams had four black students: Eugene A. Clark '08, Ernest J. Marshall, who attended Williams for three years, Willis Monroe Menard '09, and Clyde Cantey McDuffie '12.

Eugene Augustine Clark was born on 21 July 1883 in Washington, D.C., and attended M Street School (later called the Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School). In 1902 he enrolled at Phillips Exeter Academy, a private college preparatory school in Exeter, New Hampshire. Clark came to Williams in 1904 and majored in biology and history. He also ran for the varsity track team. After graduating in 1908, he enrolled at the Miner Normal School where he specialized in elementary education. In 1924 Clark received both his master's degree and his Ph.D. from Columbia University. Subsequently he was awarded honorary degrees from Morgan State College (1940) and the Catholic University of America (1951).

Clark's long and successful teaching career began in 1909 at the Birney Elementary School in Washington, D.C., where he taught for five years. It was here that Clark began to display the qualities that would distinguish his career: attention to the needs of individual students, adaptability of method, and a recognition of the diversity of students. Clark served as director of practice teaching at the Miner Normal School for four years. In 1920 he was appointed acting principal of the Normal School, then quickly promoted to principal, a position he held for over five years. Subsequently Clark was appointed to the superintendency for a period of nine years. In 1930 he became the first president of the Miners Teachers College. He also directed the summer session at Morgan State College in Maryland and was both teacher and administrator at the Manassas Institute in Manassas, Virginia.

A devout Catholic, Clark worked with the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, the Holy Name Society, the National Council of Catholic Men, and the Young Men's Christian Association, among other groups. He was also active in the N.A.A.C.P., the East and West Association, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He served on the executive boards of the Catholic Charities, the Southeast Settlement House, and the Adult Education Council and was a member of numerous

educational organizations, among them the National Education Association, the Progressive Education Association, the Eastern States Association of Professional Schools for Teachers, and the Columbia Educational Association. Clark chaired the Interstate Teacher Education Conference in 1942. In May 1969 the Eugene A. Clark School in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in his honor. Clark died in 1962 in Providence, Rhode Island, leaving behind his wife, Mabel, and son, Eugene, Jr.

Ernest Jones Marshall was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1888 to Sowell and Matilda Marshall. Like Clark, he attended Phillips Exeter Academy, then enrolled at Williams in 1904, where he was in residence for three years. He went on to receive his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1907. Marshall coached football and track before entering Northwestern University Medical School, from which he graduated in 1927. After a one-year internship at Kansas City's General Hospital No. 2, Marshall practiced privately in Kansas City until 1959. Marshall also served for a number of years on the staffs of Wheatly-Provident Hospital and the venereal disease clinic at General Hospital No. 1. He was a member of the Kansas City Medical Society, the Missouri Pan-Medical Society, and Alpha Phi Alpha. Marshall died in 1959, survived by his wife, Willa E. (Parish), and son, Dr. Ernest Jones.

Willis Monroe Menard of High Point, North Carolina, was born to Willis T. Menard, Jr., and Rebecca B. (Thompson) Menard on 2 September 1888. He was the grandson of the Honorable Willis T. Menard, the first Negro to be elected to Congress (1870). (Menard was not allowed to retain his seat despite a 3,000-vote advantage over his opponent.)

Awarded a general scholarship at Williams, Menard enrolled in 1905. After graduating in 1909, he furthered his studies at the Washington Normal School and the Washington College of Pharmacy, where he received a degree in 1923. Menard was awarded a master's degree in education from Pennsylvania State University in 1933. He worked variously as a researcher, an examiner for the New York State Regents Board, and a writer. He also served in World War I.

In his career as a teacher at Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., Menard taught German, science, and social studies. Later he served as chair of the Department of Romance Languages at North Carolina's Johnson C. Smith University, and also taught at Livingston College. He died in August 1963.

A member of the class of 1912, Clyde Cantey McDuffie was born on 5 October 1889 in Washington, D.C., to Joseph Allen and Sally Lucretia (Cantey) McDuffie. At Williams McDuffie was a member of the Classical Club, participated in activities at the YMCA, and won second prize in Latin in 1911. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa and went on to teach Latin, French, and mathematics at Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School from 1913 to 1937. In 1930 he received his master's degree from Columbia University Teachers College. Between 1927 and 1955 McDuffie served as the District of Columbia's supervising director of foreign languages for its junior and senior high schools. Active in his church, McDuffie taught Sunday school, served as a trustee of Plymouth Congregational Church (1948-1955), and directed the Congregational Christian Service Committee (1947-1954). During World War II, he became a chief registrar with the Selective Service and was placed in charge of rationing at the Phillips Wormley and Giddings Schools in Washington, D.C. He was also a member of the NAACP. McDuffie was active in Washington's Williams Alumni Club, the Classical Association, and the Modern Language Association of the Middle Atlantic States (1920-1955). He served as class agent for the Alumni Fund from 1948 until his death in 1961. McDuffie was survived by his wife, Irene K. (Trigg) McDuffie.



## CHAPTER 3: THE M STREETERS

The years between 1912 and 1921 brought many “firsts” to the United States, among them the release of the silent film *Birth of a Nation*, the first presidential public statement against lynching, and the right to fight in World War I awarded to black men. While Williams’ black men were directly affected by these changes, their time in Williamstown was mostly positive—and what they learned there prepared them to achieve great things in their fields of study and in their communities.

Washington, D.C.’s M Street School was a feeder for Williams when it came to black students. Carter Lee Marshall was one who went on to Williams and did very well in life. Graduating as valedictorian of his class at the M Street School, Marshall joined Williams’ class of 1920. He served briefly as a private in the army in 1918, graduated Phi Beta Kappa at Williams, and moved on to Howard University, where he received his M.D. in 1924. He also studied at the University of Vienna and completed a residency in dermatology at Harvard.

Active in society and politics, Marshall was an officer of the Elks Club, chairman of the United Negro College Fund, a member of the Connecticut Civil Rights Commission and officer of the NAACP’s New Haven chapter, and was the first black man to be named to the board of directors of the Connecticut State Prison in Wethersfield. He was also a Mason, a Rotarian, and a member of the Williams Club in New York. Marshall retired to St. Thomas with his wife and lived to see his son attend Harvard and Yale. He died in 1962.

Henry Alexander Williams was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1889. He joined the class of 1914 at Williams, but stayed for only two years before continuing his education at the University of Vermont. While at Williams he played on the junior varsity baseball team. He did not achieve his ambition to become a teacher, but in World War I he rose to the rank of lieutenant in the New York State National Guard, and afterward played baseball professionally for the Mohawk Giants. Williams retired from baseball after three years; subsequently he worked for the Southern Pacific Lines at Pier 49 in North River, New York, until his retirement.

Originally a member of the class of 1919 at Williams, Howard Franklin Lewis served as a corporal in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Pioneer Infantry during the war, obtained his undergraduate degree from Colgate University in 1920, and became assistant principal at the Esher School in Trenton, New Jersey, a position he held until 1924. He also taught geography at Sumner Normal College in St. Louis, Missouri. Lewis was a member of the American Geographical Society, the American Legion, the Elks Club, and the Upsilon Chapter of Omega Phi Beta of St. Louis. He was also ordained as a minister in 1924, and served as pastor of St. Louis's Central Baptist Church.

Rayford Whittingham Logan graduated valedictorian of his class at the M Street School and joined Williams' class of 1917 as a transfer student from the University of Pittsburgh. At Williams he served as library orator, ran varsity cross-country, won first prize in the Junior Moonlight Oratorical Contest, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. In 1917 Logan joined the army but filed for discharge after encountering racial difficulties. He remained in France for some time, and served as assistant to W.E.B. Du Bois before returning home.

Logan held professorships at Virginia Union University from 1925 to 1930 and at Atlanta University from 1933 to 1938. He served in the State Department's Inter-American Affairs Bureau during the 1940s, chaired a federal committee on the participation of blacks in national defense from 1940 to 1945, and was a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 1947 to 1950. He was appointed to the board of editors of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* in 1949, and in 1965 received honorary degrees from Williams and from Howard University.

In 1971 Logan was appointed Distinguished Professor of History at Howard University and in 1980 was awarded the NAACP's Springarn Medal, the organization's highest honor for outstanding achievement by an African American. A prominent scholar, Logan wrote and edited numerous books and articles during his career. His publications include: *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States and Haiti, 1776–1891* (1941); *The Negro and the Post-war World: A Primer* (1945); *The Senate and the Versailles Mandate*

*System* (1945); *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877–1901* (1954); *The American Negro: Old World Background and New World Experience* (1967); *The Negro in the United States: Ordeal of Democracy* (1971); and *Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867–1967* (1969). In 1982, the year he died, Logan was collaborating with Michael R. Winston on *The Dictionary of American Negro Biography*.

Henry Adams Brown won the Rice Book Prize in Latin and the Benedict Prize in German at Williams, where he also sang in the choir and joined the Classical Society before graduating in 1921. He enrolled at Howard Medical School and thereafter began his internship at Freedman’s Hospital in Washington, D.C. Brown passed the state board medical exams but unfortunately did not get a chance to practice in his chosen field: he died in February 1927 after a long illness.

John Wilson Freeman stands out as a special case in the years 1912-1921. Extremely intelligent and well-liked, Freeman prepared his assignments diligently. He originally joined the class of 1916, but with advanced credits graduated with the class of 1915, just missing inclusion in Phi Beta Kappa. He studied at Philadelphia Theological Seminary until enlisting in the army in 1917, where he achieved the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant. Upon his return from overseas Logan returned to school, receiving his B.T.S. from Harvard Theological School. He was ordained in Washington, D.C., and ministered to congregations there and in Connecticut and Texas. He also taught mathematics at the Tuskegee Institute and served as a health inspector for the New York State Department of Health. Freeman died in 1943.

A transfer student from Howard University, John King Rector ’17 brought a love of science to Williams that compelled him to return to Howard Medical School upon graduation. After earning his M.D., Rector established himself as a physician and surgeon at Freedman’s Hospital. He contracted tuberculosis and was treated, but never fully recovered. Records indicate that he died in 1944.

*I should like to call attention to the career of  
the colored men who have had the privilege*

*of studying at Williams. I think that the school will be proud of the kind of life that these men are living and of the contributions that they are making.*      Rayford Logan (in an *Alumni Record* survey)

Rayford Logan said it best: the Williams-educated black man was indeed making great strides. The men that represented the black student population in the years from 1912 to 1921 achieved great things, and many of their achievements were shared with the larger community. These men did not simply strive to become financially successful or leaders in their fields, but became members of organizations that sought to raise the communities in which they lived and worked. They felt that the well-educated should educate. As officers and members of the NAACP, the United Negro College Fund, and interracial committees and organizations that involved Negroes in elections and political life, these black men of Williams dedicated themselves to lifting up the black community.

## CHAPTER 4: RENAISSANCE MEN

The United States was characterized, for much of the 1920s, by prosperity for many whites and reclamation of identity—largely through what has come to be called the Harlem Renaissance—for many blacks. The 1920s were generally more peaceful than preceding decades for blacks, and many felt significant progress in their economic independence. With Howard University as the center of higher education for blacks, the search for recognition, pride, and independence was well-defined in Washington, D.C. (though nowhere near the level of New York’s Harlem).

But Williams College proved to be a trying place for black students of the Harlem Renaissance era. Most of the college’s black students were from the District of Columbia because Williams awarded scholarships throughout the early part of the century to the top black students at Washington’s Lawrence Dunbar High School. The black students lived apart from the rest of the student body, and many felt physically and intellectually isolated.

The black students Williams admitted were considered to be the best of the best. Many were inspired and accomplished leaders in their communities and chose prestigious colleges and universities with the goal of “uplifting the race.” The difficulty they felt was not their segregation at Williams—self-segregation was, after all, a defining characteristic of the Harlem Renaissance era—but rather that they had left a place where they were recognized for accomplishments to find themselves regarded as “nobodies” in a rather remote area. Many black students, whose goals were far-reaching, were discouraged by the fact that the serenity and seclusion of Williams couldn’t support the cultural life and political action they craved.

The pool of blacks at Williams during the 1920s was small—it included Henry Adams Brown ’21, Sterling Allen Brown ’22, Leroy Southworth Hart ’22, Richard Laurence Plaut ’22, Ralph Winfield Scott ’23, William Allison Davis ’24, Warren Elton Harrigan ’25, Mortimer Grover Weaver II ’25, Lee Williams Johnson ’26, John Baptiste Hall III ’27, and James Franklin Henry ’29—but it was to be even further self-segregated to form the core group of blacks who would become influential intellectual leaders.

The first of these leaders was Sterling Allen Brown, a graduate of Dunbar. Brown entered Williams at 17 on an academic scholarship for minority students. During his time at Williams Brown served on the debate team, waited on tables at Berkshire Hall, pledged for Omega Psi Phi and played for the Common Club tennis team, where he and Allison Davis eventually teamed up to win national competitions. Brown spoke highly of one of his professors in particular, George Dutton, whose approach to modern American literature was unconventional. His critical influence, and the influence of the writers he encouraged Brown to read—Flaubert, Conrad, Dostoyevski—would stay with Brown for the rest of his life, informing his work as a teacher and writer.

Also at Williams, Brown developed a new passion for music, especially jazz and the blues, but he admitted that, while he loved listening to them, he did not want his white peers to know—these musical forms were considered less than respectable. Brown shared most of his Williams experience with a group of friends that included Allison Davis, John Dewey, Carter Marshall, Ralph Scott, and Mortimer Weaver. The young men took long walks to discuss the “race problem” and the absence of women. By the time Brown graduated in 1922, he had been elected Phi Beta Kappa, received the Graves Prize for his essay, “The Comic Spirit in Shakespeare and Molière,” and was the only student to receive “final honors” in English. He graduated cum laude.

Brown went on to Harvard University, where he received his master’s degree in English. He then taught at several black colleges before accepting a professorship at Howard University, where he taught English for 30 years, becoming a mentor to many students, including Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Nkrumah, Ossie Davis, and Amiri Baraka. Brown was elected to membership in the Academy of American Poets and named poet laureate of the District of Columbia. His works include *The Negro in American Fiction* (1937) and *Negro Poetry and Drama* (1937). He died of leukemia on 13 January 1989 in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Equally influential in later life was William Allison Davis, class of 1924. Also from Washington, Davis seems to have been Sterling Brown’s closest friend, for they spent the majority of their time at Williams together. Davis was class valedictorian,



graduated summa cum laude, and followed those prestigious titles with two master's degrees, in comparative literature and anthropology, from Harvard. He went on to teach at the University of Chicago, where he was named the John Dewey Distinguished Professor of Education, from 1942 to 1983. (The award was named after a professor at the university who was also a Williams graduate.) During his time there, Davis made breakthrough observations on racial disparities in education and educational testing. He served on the Commission on Civil Rights during both the Johnson and Nixon presidencies and was vice-chairman of the Department of Labor's Commission on Manpower Retraining. In 1967, Davis became the first person in the field of education to be named a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Allison Davis died on 21 November 1983 from complications following open-heart surgery.

Seven black men graduated from Williams between 1925 and 1928. Warren Elton Harrigan and Mortimer Grover Weaver II graduated in 1925. Weaver, a Dunbar graduate, went on to become a professor at Howard University. Lee Williams Johnson and John Baptiste Hall III graduated in 1926 and 1927, respectively. Williams graduated George Bruce Robinson, Walter B. Williams, and Ralph Clark White in 1928.

George Bruce Robinson attended Boston University Law School, receiving his J.D. in 1936. He went from a distinguished career as an attorney to a judgeship in Boston. Robinson seemed to appreciate the Williams experience far more than many of the other black graduates of his time, who felt that the college's isolation smothered their talents as black leaders. Robinson noted in an alumni update, "I enjoyed long walks in the countryside and climbs in the mountains from which I gained a lasting love for nature." Robinson's other accomplishments included a professorship at Livingston College and an appointment to the office of assistant attorney general of Massachusetts. He served on the board of directors of the New England Home for Little Wanderers, was vice-president of the board of the Roxbury, Massachusetts chapter of the YMCA, and received the Honorable John Forbes Perkins Award for distinguished achievement in the field of child social services. Robinson died at the age of 87 in Newton, Massachusetts.

The second of the three graduates of 1928 was Walter B. Williams of Albany, New York. The recipient of the Benedict Prize in French, Williams went on to the University of Illinois, where he received his B.S. in library science, and Howard University, where he earned his master's degree in French. Williams also was granted Rosenwald and American Library fellowships to prepare a critical bibliography of American Negro literature at Columbia University. He was an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha, the D.C. Library Association, the National Cathedral Association, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and the National Urban League. Williams served in the army from 1939 to 1943. He died in 1982 at the age of 75.

Ralph Clark Wright, the final black graduate of 1928, was the last of the Dunbar graduates to attend Williams in the 1920s. After Williams, Wright received his B.S. from Lincoln University and his M.D. from Howard University. He settled with his family in Washington, D.C., and took up practice as an ears, nose, and throat specialist. He was active in the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, the Medico-Chirurgical Society, and the Bachelor Benedict Club. Wright took his own life in August 1946.

James Franklin Henry was the sole black graduate of 1929. He went on to Howard University, where he received his M.D., and practiced medicine in the hill district of Pittsburgh for 28 years. Henry was a member of numerous fraternities and medical clubs. He died in 1970.

While black and white students appear not to have developed strong friendships at Williams in the 1920s, there is no evidence of animosity between them. The determination to succeed propelled Williams' blacks to success in their undergraduate and graduate studies and in their careers. At the same time, they managed to return the gift—to help lift up the communities from which they had come, and to which, as leaders, they returned.

The 1920s was a period of tremendous growth for urban blacks, and isolation at Williams did not prevent its black graduates from making great strides. They came out of the Williams community seemingly stronger than ever, having been given the opportunity to sharpen their intellectual skills in an environment that offered few distractions. Their

post-graduate work and later successes are testimony to the intensity of their desire to lead—as writers, physicians, poets, and teachers. Men such as Allison Davis, John Dewey, Carter Marshall, and Sterling Brown left their high schools armed with raw talent, intelligence, and desire, and through training at Williams and their graduate schools, gave back to their communities—and to America—tenfold.

## CHAPTER 5: THE GREAT ONES

Conducting research for a history of black students in a predominately white institution such as Williams is difficult. Often, the most relevant (and revealing) information about Williams' black alumni of the 1930s lies in personal accounts, stories of post-graduate success, and newspaper and magazine articles about them. But without question, many of the seven black men who attended Williams during the years 1930-1939 achieved extraordinary success in life.

The class of 1930 held three black graduates, Clinton Everett Knox, Arthur Courtney Logan, and Rupert Alstynne Lloyd, Jr. While documentation concerning their experiences at Williams is difficult to find, it is easy to imagine the social atmosphere of Williams—and of greater New England—at that time. Even in an era in which society struggled to accommodate blacks, many people of color would have thought twice before moving to an area where they would be the absolute minority.

Clinton Knox's personal statement in the ten-year anniversary record of the class of 1930 makes reference to the fact that his education did not end at Williams. Knox went on to Brown University, earning a master's degree in history in 1931, then taught at Morgan College for 12 years. During this time, he studied at Harvard (where he took his doctoral degree in European history and international relations in 1940) and also traveled widely in Europe. Knox kept in touch with Williams alumni during his post-Williams years. From time to time he saw Arthur Logan, Hal Gross, Gerald May, and Rupert Lloyd. Despite the fact that there were so few black alumni at that time, Knox and others seem to have drawn strength from each other.

The remainder of Knox's career is remarkable. Before he retired in 1973, in addition to his teaching, Knox served as a policy advisor for the State Department, lectured at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and was U.S. ambassador to Dahomey (now Benin) and Haiti.

Colin G. Jameson '30, a white classmate of Knox's, noted that Knox was "a top student—you had to be to get in, if black, in those days. He got involved in things..." Another piece of information about Knox—a memo which might well summarize the respect with which he was regarded—reads, "Dr. Clinton E. Knox '30 has been

nominated by President Johnson to be the ambassador to the African nation of Dahomey. He has been deputy chief of mission in the embassy at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, since 1963 and in the United States Foreign Service since 1955.” By the end of his career, Knox had come to be recognized not only as a great student or great man, but as a great American.

Another remarkable black member of the class of 1930 was Arthur Courtney Logan. Articles about Logan’s life and career make little mention of Williams, but references to his childhood show that his father’s position at Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute was a decisive factor in Logan’s life—as were his friendships, as a child, with people such as Booker T. Washington.

After graduating from Williams, Logan studied at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons, where he received his M.D. in 1934. He went on to a distinguished career as one of the preeminent doctors of his time. An article in the *New York Times* on 13 May 1965 titled “Poverty Chief for New York City” described how Logan flew to India to attend to Duke Ellington, who had fallen ill while on a State Department mission.

Logan combined his love for his race with his passion for medicine. At the peak of his career Logan, along with 29 other physicians of the Upper Manhattan Medical Group, served 25,000 people, most of them blacks who could not afford health insurance. In a related achievement, Logan took a leadership position in New York City’s campaign against poverty, which involved the building of the \$200 million Manhattanville Health Park in Harlem. Both Logan and his wife were active in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—Mrs. Logan was the only northern member of the SCLC’s board of directors—and once raised \$11,000 at a home reception for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Logan was killed when he fell from a West Side highway viaduct in 1973. Foul play was ruled out when an investigation determined that an inner ear infection had affected his sense of balance. Logan’s funeral was huge: an estimated 2,000 people attended. Among the notables were Mayor John Lindsay, the Rev. Ralph David

Abernathy of the SCLC, Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, and recording artist Roberta Flack, who sang at the service.

Rupert Alstynne Floyd, Jr., the third black member of the class of 1930, went on to Harvard for his master's degree and taught school for eight years before joining the U.S. Foreign Service. He was stationed variously in Monrovia, Paris, Budapest, and Karachi, and during 1961 was the State Department's counselor to the U.S. embassy at Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Edwin G. Brown and John A. Davis of the class of 1933 were Williams' next black graduates. Little is known about Brown's subsequent career except that he worked as a production control specialist with the General Electric Company in Schenectady, New York.

John Davis majored in English and wrote creatively as an undergraduate. He was on the board of the *Williams Literary Quarterly*. In his senior year his play, *John Henry*, which dealt with the exploitation of black labor, was staged. Davis maintained a friendly relationship with his alma mater. In 1962 the *Alumni Review* published his article, "AMSAC Seeks to Encourage 'La Negritude.'" (AMSAC is the acronym for the American Society of African Culture, of which Davis was executive director at the time the article was published.)

After graduating from Williams, Davis attended the University of Wisconsin, earning his master's degree in political science in 1934. In 1936 he accepted a teaching position at Lincoln University, where he remained until 1953. Upon earning his doctorate at Columbia University in 1953, Davis taught political science at Ohio State University and, later, at City College of New York, where for five years he chaired the Department of Political Science. Davis was a member of the executive council and committee of the American Political Science Association throughout the 1950s and 1960s and at one point held the position of vice-president.

Davis's later accomplishments include an assistant directorship of New York's State Committee Against Discrimination under governors Herbert H. Lehman and Charles Poletti, directorship of the Review and Analysis Division of President

Roosevelt's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, and head of the Policy Analysis Division of the Wage Stabilization Board. In 1951 Davis became a consultant to the Office of Personnel of the Department of State and worked for fair employment practices within the department. Governor Averell Harriman appointed Davis commissioner of the New York State Commission Against Discrimination in 1957, a position he held until 1961.

The lone black member of the class of 1934, and the last black graduate of the 1930s at Williams, was Sterling M. Lloyd, younger brother of Rupert A. Lloyd, Jr. At Williams, Lloyd worked in a microbiology lab, played in a local jazz band, and waited tables in a fraternity house. After earning his M.D. at Howard University's College of Medicine in 1939, Lloyd served his internship at Cleveland City Hospital. He returned to Howard in 1945 and practiced there until 1963, when he began teaching internal medicine at the College of Medicine and lecturing at the university's School of Social Work. Later in life, Lloyd apparently offered to find minority candidates for administration positions at Williams, but no record of a response to this offer exists.

Henry Hart, Jr., enrolled in the class of 1935 but did not graduate. Hart's reasons for leaving Williams prematurely are unknown, but as the sole black student in his class, he may have suffered from an undue sense of loneliness.

Whatever their ultimate status at Williams, the black men who came to Williamstown during the 1930s were both brave and remarkable: brave for coming to Williams as minorities and remarkable for the level of post-graduate success they achieved. Their days at Williams were but the beginning of what were to become varied and vibrant careers.



CHAPTER 6: THE WAR AWAY, THE WAR AT HOME: BLACK WILLIAMS 1939–  
1955

The period between the fall of 1939 and the spring of 1948 marked the beginning of change for the men of Williams. In Europe, tensions were mounting as the fragile peace established by the Treaty of Versailles was threatened by the rise, through the 1930s, of a ruthless demagogue, Adolph Hitler, leader of Germany's National Socialist Party. At home, the Great Depression still held much of the nation in its grip; in the South, especially, violence increased as the proponents of Jim Crow segregation laws struggled to enforce the artificial divide between blacks and whites.

In the midst of these larger events and conditions, a small liberal arts college in the sleepy Berkshires may have looked very attractive to young Eugene Augustine Clark, Jr., a graduate (like many of Williams' other black students) of Washington, D.C.'s Dunbar High School. While at Dunbar, Clark knew Clyde McDuffie '12, who was responsible for directing many talented young blacks to Williams. In addition, Clark's father was a member of the class of 1908. His notable achievements included being selected as the first black president of Miner Teacher's College. A Washington, D.C. elementary school was renamed in his honor in 1969.

The younger Clark entered Williams in the fall of 1940 as the war in Europe was heating up. He seemed set to follow in his father's footsteps, but spent only a year at Williams. His reason for leaving is not known. He transferred to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1944. Returning to Washington, Clark enrolled at the Howard University School of Medicine. After a successful course of study he served his residency at Freedman's Hospital, then joined the army to serve in the Army Medical Corps in Korea. Clark returned to the United States in 1957 and joined the staff of Providence Hospital as a specialist in internal medicine. He practiced there until his death from pulmonary fibrosis in 1989.

In the fall of 1941, just after Clark's departure, another young black student arrived at the doors of Garfield House: Walter Sherwood Wilmot, Jr., of Fairfield, Connecticut. But the war did not allow Wilmot to remain long in Massachusetts. Although it is not clear when he left to join the fighting in Europe, correspondence between Wilmot and a dean of the college confirms that in December of 1945—mere

months before his class was due to graduate—Wilmot had already served two years overseas, held the rank of corporal, and was married with children. Wilmot returned to Williams soon thereafter, however, and joined the class of 1948-N. (In response to the war, Williams had begun holding classes throughout the summer; some years saw multiple graduating classes, which were differentiated by a letter after the class year.) Wilmot studied for a degree in political science and, despite his efforts to gain housing in Greylock, the married men's dormitory, remained a resident of Garfield.

Although there is a scarcity of biographical data on Wilmot, his letters to a faculty member he called Dr. Gus show that he was quite fond of Williams and had made some good friends there. He wrote from France in 1945:

While on this latest furlough I ran into one of the damndest coincidences I've yet experienced. Was out in the country [at] a small pub that is a favorite hangout of ours, and got talking to a rather elderly chap in the uniform [of] a private in the British Army. During the course of the discussion he mentioned that his youngest brother had a son that had gone to college in the States. When I asked him where he replied "Williams College" no less! Turned out that this chap was Johnny Cracknell's uncle. He said that Johnny was a Captain of a landing barge in the Royal Navy and had seen plenty of action during the invasion of France etc. Was a really big thrill for me as so far I've run into damn few Williams men, or even fellows that were at all acquainted with Billtown. We had a quite a discussion over Williams and this chap seemed to know a good bit about the old place—apparently Johnny must be a damn good salesman.

Wilmot was not the only black man to graduate from Williams in 1948. Upon his return, he encountered two other young black students in his year, Lionel Emery Bolin,

grandson of the first black man to attend Williams, and Wayman Gazaway Caliman, Jr. (There was one other African American at the college, Robertson Hickerson, who was approximately a year behind these three. At the time of the 1948 graduations, Hickerson was listed with the class of 1950.)

Lionel Bolin hailed from Poughkeepsie, New York. His grandfather, Gaius Bolin, had made history when he graduated in 1889, and his brother Livingston, while not a graduate, also attended Williams.

Life at Williams was in many ways different for Bolin than it had been for his older relatives who, while having been admitted to the college, were not allowed to room on campus. They rented lodgings from townfolk or were, more often, offered housing by black families in the area. By contrast, Bolin resided at Garfield House. He immersed himself in campus life, participating in a variety of activities, from track—winter track during his first three years, and the regular season as a sophomore—to membership on the Lecture Committee.

Bolin graduated in 1948 with a degree in English. Three years later, he served a tour of duty in the army during the Korean War, then remained overseas for a year at the Far East Command Headquarters in Tokyo. Upon returning home, he enrolled at the New York Law School, where he received his bachelor's in law in 1955. Bolin later said that his accomplishments exceeded even his own expectations. He served as a trial attorney with the Justice Department, assistant corporation counsel for the City of New York under Norman Redlich '47, and later moved to Chicago, where he joined the legal affairs department of the National Broadcasting Company. He finished his career as an attorney and director of employee relations for CBS. Since his retirement, Bolin has served as an impartial arbitrator and hearings officer for the City of Chicago, where he lives with his wife of 31 years, Jean Rudd. He is also a mentor to ex-offenders in the Big Brothers program and has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations. In addition, he served on the board of trustees at Williams from 1985 to 1990. In an interesting coincidence, Bolin's tenure as trustee of the college coincided with the centennial celebration of his grandfather Gaius's graduation.

In recalling his time at Williams, Bolin said, “Williams College taught me that even when one stumbles at the start, all will come out well in the end—if one is very lucky.”

Wayman Gazaway Caliman, Jr., also graduated with the class of 1948-N. Like Bolin, he was a very good athlete and excelled at sports while at Williams. The New York City native—known affectionately as Cal to his friends—ran track and played tennis during his first two years in the Berkshires. He also wrote for the *Williams Record* and was a member of the Williams Christian Association, the choir, the Outing Club and the Glee Club. Caliman majored in economics and lived, as did most of Williams’ black men, at Garfield House. Upon graduation he enrolled at Columbia University, where he earned a master’s degree in economics. He enlisted in the navy in 1950 and rose to the rank of captain, serving as executive officer of the Navy Resale System Office, a worldwide network of navy exchanges, commissaries, and ships’ stores. Caliman was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for his leadership in establishing the Norfolk Navy Exchange Complex.

After 29 years of military service, Caliman took the position of director of distribution traffic in the Pathmark Division of the Supermarkets General Corporation, an office he held until his death from cancer in 1986. He had been a longstanding member of the Navy Supply School Alumni Association and an active member of the NAACP, the Retired Officers Association of Washington, D.C., and the 369<sup>th</sup> Veterans Association.

Although Caliman’s naval service and other activities brought him acclaim both at home and abroad, his name carries a particular significance at Williams in connection with an incident that occurred in February of 1947. Caliman and another student, Norm Redlich (a white man), entered the Spring Street Barbershop and enquired about the price of a haircut. They were told that a haircut would cost Caliman \$3—three times the amount the shop charged its white patrons. According to some accounts, the shop’s owner, as well as several other barbers in the area, raised their prices in this way to discourage blacks from patronizing their businesses, apparently fearful that they would lose their white customers if they took business from blacks.

However, an 1865 statute had made it illegal for the proprietor or employees of any public establishment to discriminate against any person on the basis of race. Armed with what appeared to be blatant evidence of the shop's discriminatory action, Caliman, who wrote for the *Record*, and Redlich, the newspaper's editor, felt certain they could prove in court that Medirick Bleau, the shop's proprietor, had acted illegally. Redlich filed charges of discrimination against Bleau.

Just before the trial Redlich, Caliman, and other students organized a picket of Bleau's shop that would run for two days and coincide with homecoming weekend. Returning alumni were greeted by the sight of crowds of demonstrating students and townspeople. The demonstrations, along with the ensuing four-day trial—later dubbed “the barbershop incident”—attracted much attention from the local and regional press. Judging from the range of opinions that appeared in the *Record* and other sources, many Williams men seem to have sided with Caliman and Redlich, though there were a few outspoken opponents of the charges. Following the *Record's* front page coverage of the incident in the 20 February 1947 issue, some observers agreed with the paper's stand but expressed reservations about Redlich's methods. The editor soon found himself embroiled in the midst of a tense debate, and many people questioned his motives for going into the barbershop with Caliman in the first place.

The lawsuit that Caliman and Redlich brought against Bleau disturbed the relatively calm waters of race relations at Williams. Even after the suit was officially closed and Bleau fined \$50—a pittance even then—reports indicate that the atmosphere in Williamstown remained somewhat unsettled. Talk of the incident was replaced by reports of performances by the Glee Club and swim team victories, but there is no doubt that a shift had occurred at Williams. Soon after, the fraternities' discrimination against Jews and Negroes became the new issue hotly debated in the dormitories and hallways of Williams College. The spring of 1947 had brought with it several problems that the college community had never before had to contend with. But these were issues that would soon thrust the campus into the throes of the racial conflicts that were sweeping the nation.

A music major, Robert Hickerson '50 sat on the Garfield Committee and served on the Concert and Glee Club committees during all four of his years at Williams. After earning his master's degree in musicology, Hickerson went on to teach in the math department at Simon Gratz High School in Philadelphia.

Hannibal Madden of the class of 1952 majored in physics. Active in campus life, Madden played lacrosse, was a member for four years of Cap & Bells and the Radio Club, served on the Undergraduate Committee during his junior and senior years, and as a senior chaired the Rules and Nominations Committee.

A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Hugh G. Robinson earned a master's degree in civil engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was commissioned in the Army Corp of Engineers in 1954. After retiring from the military, Robinson became vice-president of the Southland Corporation and president of Cityplace Development Corporation, where he managed the planning, design, and construction of a 42-story office building and 288 multifamily residential units. Robinson received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Williams and also attended the Harvard Management Program for Executives. He is a member of the Dallas Citizens Council, the National Society of Professional Engineers, the Greater Dallas Chamber and the Dallas Black Chamber, and serves on the boards of numerous organizations.

Herman C. Jordan and Lafayette Diggs came to Williams with the classes of 1954 and 1956, respectively, but did not graduate.

Herbert E. Kinds '55 graduated from Williams Phi Beta Kappa with a major in chemistry. Among the many committees he served on were those of the Williams College Chapel (WCC), the *Gulielmsonian*, where he was managing editor, the Lecture Committee, and the Philosophical Union.

Andrew Joseph Santos of the class of 1955 majored in English and served as a junior advisor. Active in sports, Santos played football during his junior and senior years, basketball for three years, and golf. He was also a member of the Newman Club.

## CHAPTER 7: BEFORE THE STORM



Theodore Bates Wynne '58, known lovingly as Ted to his college friends, was a very busy student during his years at Williams. Originally from Worcester, Massachusetts, Wynne was a member of the Sigma Phi fraternity, was selected by the Gargoyle Society to be part of its 63<sup>rd</sup> delegation, and also served as a College Council representative. During his junior year Wynne was a junior advisor and a staff member of the humor magazine *The Purple Cow*. As well as being a member of the Student Activities Council, Wynne served as a member of the WCC, which strives to deepen the religious life of Williams students through worship, study, and action. He graduated with a degree in political science.

In 1958, William D. Mosley, Jr., was in his senior year at Williams. A native of Rockford, Illinois, Mosely was a member of the German Club and also participated in the French play. He left Williams with a degree in chemistry.

William C. George, Jr., came to Williams from Washington, D.C., in 1955. During his first year he played on the football and basketball teams. Later George was elected vice-president of Sigma Phi and was publicity chairman of the WCC. A philosophy major, George graduated with the class of 1959.

William Wayne Jackson, originally from Pembroke West, Bermuda, graduated in 1961.

William Madison Boyd II of Atlanta, Georgia, came to Williams from Deefield Academy. His stellar academic performance kept him on the dean's list for much of his time at Williams. He also played lacrosse, was vice-president of the Junior Advisors during his junior year, and as a senior was elected president of his class, vice-president of the College Council, chairman of the Honor System and Discipline Committee, and a member of the Gargoyle Society. Boyd graduated in 1963 with a degree in political science and as a member of Beta Theta Pi.

In 1959, Gordon J. Davis came to Williams from Chicago. A political science major, Davis played basketball for all four of his years at Williams, served on the Nominations and Elections Committee, was co-chairman of the Williams Civil Rights

Committee, and served on the College Council during his senior year. After graduating in 1963, Davis went on to Harvard Law School where he received his degree in 1967.

While he practiced law privately for a number of years, Davis also became active in the political and cultural life of New York City and has built a distinguished public career. In 1973, at the age of 32, he was appointed to the New York City Planning Commission under the Lindsay administration. Five years later, he served as Commissioner of Parks and Recreation and was responsible for the management of 25,000 acres of city parkland. As the youngest commissioner in the city's history, Davis created the free concerts series that brought artists such as Diana Ross and Simon and Garfunkel to Central Park. He also played a key role in helping to establish the Central Park Conservancy.

Davis was later to become the first black man to attain the presidency of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, an institution he remains involved with today as Founding Chairman of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the first new constituent of Lincoln Center since 1969. A board member for more than 20 years, Davis is a true insider, familiar with the organization's operations and dealing with its sometimes difficult personalities. He was the driving force behind the Center's recent capital campaign, which raised more than \$80 million of its \$115 million goal during his tenure. As president, Davis oversaw 350 live performances annually and managed operations for a complex that is home to 13 performing arts organizations, including the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Ballet, the New York Philharmonic, and the Julliard School of Music.

The recipient of literally dozens of awards, Davis has received honorary degrees from Williams College and Bard College. In 1993 he was awarded Williams' Bicentennial Medal for Distinguished Achievement. He has been honored with the Harlem School of Arts Founders Medal, the Parks Council Annual Award, the Frederick Law Olmsted Medal of the Central Park Conservancy, the Medal of the City of New York for Exceptional Service, Jazz at Lincoln Center's Award for Leadership, and the Judicial Friends Award for Leadership, among many others.

Before joining Williams' class of 1963, John A. Davis, Jr., attended the Fieldston School. While at Williams, Davis became a member of the Williams College Young Democrats Club. He graduated from Williams in 1963 with a degree in biology.

Ben Kofi, a native of Accra in Ghana, West Africa, attended the Achimota School. Before entering Williams in 1959, Kofi spent five months in the United States as Ghana's representative to the Herald Tribune Youth Forum. At Williams, he played soccer, devoted himself to the study of political economy, and graduated in 1963.

James Laurence DeJongh of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, graduated with honors in Spanish in 1964. At Williams, DeJongh was an executive board member of Cap & Bells, vice-president of the Spanish Club, managed the swim team, and was active in the Newman Club. A dean's list student, he also served on the Civil Rights Committee.

Edward C. Coaxum, Jr. '66 graduated with a degree in religious studies. He currently serves on the Cuyahoga (Ohio) County Board of Elections as a Democratic Party member.

## CHAPTER 8: THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED!

College campuses are not immune to the issues unfolding outside their walls. The integration of black students into predominantly white institutions forced schools across the nation to adjust to the needs of the growing minority or face on-campus unrest until changes were made. Black students at Williams refused to let their geographic isolation inure them to the historical changes taking place in the greater society. Instead, students of the classes of 1967-1970 sparked revolutions at Williams that changed the college forever. Their stories are presented here so that what they accomplished will not be forgotten.

The class of 1967 entered Williams at the beginning of a series of tragic events that would shape the 1960s. Three months into their first semester, on 22 November 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. To add to the air of political uncertainty, the country struggled in the summer of 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which dramatically widened the conflict in Vietnam. Despite these grim circumstances, black students at Williams found an emerging leader in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose inspiring message of nonviolence gave hope to students across the nation as they grappled with the problems of a troubled world.

John H. Gladney, Jr. '67 was one of many students who took King's message to heart. He was instrumental in organizing a four-day trip to Morehouse College, a predominantly black, all-male institution in Atlanta, Georgia. Four black men from Williams made the long trip to hear King speak on the role college students could play in combating racism, and to learn how to effect change on their campuses using his methods of passive resistance.

Although the class of 1967 boasted only four African American students—Gladney, David E. Jackson, Clarence S. Wilson, Jr., and Don Jackson—their example shows that small numbers can make a real difference. Gladney lives in Bethesda, Maryland, and operates his own consulting business in Washington, D.C. David Jackson has been a teacher and administrator in Shoreham, New York, since 1992. Wilson was a member of the Berkshire Symphony Orchestra and played double bass with progressive jazz groups. He now heads his own law firm and teaches arts and entertainment law at the

Illinois Institute of Technology's Chicago-Kent College of Law. He is also an active member of the advisory board of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs. Don Jackson did not graduate from Williams, but he contributed a great deal to Williams by founding the Williams Afro-American Society (WAAS). The current members of the Black Student Union owe Jackson their full respect and appreciation: he opened the doors for the BSU's existence.

The class of 1968 experienced African Americans' growing anguish and benefited from the seeds of change that had been planted by earlier generations. It is fair to speculate that this class comprised the most anticipated group of black students since integration began at Williams (and before coeducation). Williams boasted its largest black enrollment to date: five students. By their senior year, the class of 1968, along with the rest of the world, registered the shock of four assassinations, beginning with the assassination of Malcolm X, the once-militant spokesman for Black Islam turned moderate political activist. While the majority at Williams did not seem affected by his death, black students felt that the assassination represented a depreciation of black American leadership and interests.

Violence seemed to intensify in the world outside Williams with the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in January 1968. The nation watched as thousands of college age men were sent overseas. The campus responded with vigils and prayers for friends and family members who were being sent to fight a war in a nation which few could find on a map.

The campus was shaken by despair once again when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who epitomized the ideals of nonviolent protest and racial brotherhood, was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Williams students—black and white—prided themselves on applying King's methods of passive resistance and nonviolence. However, after his death, some of the blacks at Williams questioned whether practicing nonviolence was the solution to African Americans' problems. One black student expressed such feelings when he said, "Militant, more aggressive moves will play a bigger part in this movement."

Sherman Jones '68 expressed his feelings about Williams bluntly, calling it “an unnatural choice,” and summarizing the Williams experience for blacks at that time as “lonely and isolating.” Despite his feelings, Jones led the relatively new WAAS during this confusing period. Although tempted to initiate strong action on campus in response to King’s death, initially he spoke against the sit-ins and boycotts that many other black organizations took part in at other colleges. WAAS members were particularly close to members of the faculty and administration and decided to use alternative means of protest only as a last resort. Jones called for the development of various programs that would benefit Williams in the spirit of Dr. King’s life and work. These included:

- a history department chair that would develop and promote in-depth study of blacks in America
- a Martin Luther King Memorial Library that would house Afro-American writings and other materials
- a winter “A Better Chance” program dedicated to preparing disadvantaged high school students for preparatory school and college
- funding to support the functions of the WAAS.

The most immediate of the proposals—funding for the WAAS—was undertaken immediately, due to the diligence of WAAS members, who donated \$1,000 of their own money to the cause. Fundraising continued with Martin Luther King benefit concerts and donations from the College Council and the Gargoyle Society.

Although the WAAS had succeeded in bringing positive action to bear in the wake of the tragedy of King’s death, feelings of stability on campus would be short-lived: on 4 June 1968, mere days after graduation, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated while campaigning in Los Angeles. The class felt that its journey through Williams had ended as it had begun: it had been only five years since John Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. But despite the turbulence of their time, the five black graduates of 1968 went on to become distinguished alumni. Sherman Jones set the stage for success as chairman of the WAAS and graduated with honors in American civilization.

The events that took place in 1969 changed Williams forever, and the students of 1969-1973 are to thank for the first true revolution on the campus of Williams College: the occupation of Hopkins Hall.

On 12 March 1969 the WAAS presented the administration with a list of 15 demands detailing the implementation of an Afro-American studies department—an action that stemmed from African American students’ growing concern over the administration’s lack of interest in creating a curriculum devoted to black Americans. (Of the four proposals Sherman Jones had laid out following the King assassination, all but one—WAAS funding—had been ignored.) Students both on and off the Williams campus noted that Williams was far behind other schools in taking up issues of diversity programs and curriculum. A year earlier, students at Columbia University had taken over an administration building, demanding a proper Afro-American studies program.

Preston Washington ’70 pointed out the ineffectiveness of the administration’s qualitative changes and argued that the amount of change generally was inadequate for future classes:

Last year we asked for more books, more manuscripts, more black student, a black dean, a black chair—but we didn’t have the understanding to develop a blueprint for effective change. This year we realized that the issue was more basic than we had realized. Black students were brought here and pushed through a white monocultural environment. They were being disenfranchised and dehumanized in an atmosphere that purported to be liberal.

Washington continued to articulate the feelings of blacks at Williams by evaluating the lives of black students at Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Dartmouth, Simmons, and Oberlin. By Christmas the WAAS had drawn up a list of possible solutions and presented it to the administration. The goal of the proposal was the elimination of the “institutional racism” felt by Williams’ students of color. President John E. Sawyer read



the proposal, then met with college provost Hyde Lewis and the WAAS for a candid discussion of its contents.

The turning point came the following spring, after a meeting between the WAAS and assistant professor George Marcus. Called to discuss the implementation of the proposal, the meeting was a disaster, leaving both students and administrators upset and disappointed. The students felt they hadn't been taken seriously. WAAS members rallied around Washington during a King memorial service. Washington told them there were two options: "Leave college or stay and fight."

At a three a.m. meeting the following day, WAAS members met to plan the takeover of Hopkins Hall. Uncertain of what the outcome of their loosely planned action would be, some members brought along enough food to last several days. According to later accounts, the students ran into security officers who asked what they were doing in the building at that hour. The students replied that they were taking over the building. Apparently the officers didn't take them seriously, but when they left their posts, they were replaced by students who began securing the building.

President Sawyer was not alerted to the takeover until five a.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April. He immediately called on professor and college provost Stephen R. Lewis '60 to deal with the problem. Lewis, the youngest provost in Williams' history, called together a group of professors to assess the situation. They immediately concluded that they would not use force to expel the students, and would not deny the students food. Lewis later said, "It would have been silly to try and starve them." When word of the occupation had spread across campus, a group of white students drafted a document that expressed unconditional support for the actions of the WAAS students. Upwards of 300 students rallied outside Hopkins, and many white students backed up their words by guarding the building in case the administration decided to expel the students.

The Hopkins Hall occupation came to an end with a late night meeting in Chapin Hall. Remarkably, three-fourths of the student body attended the meeting, eager to hear the administration's solutions. Lewis announced that the administration was willing to agree to 12 of the 15 WAAS demands. By one a.m., the occupying students left Hopkins

feeling they had accomplished something. Among the demands accepted by the college were the active development of the Afro-American Society, the addition of classes across the curriculum to include African American history and culture, and the hiring of more blacks.

Although the members of the WAAS who organized the occupation of Hopkins have been described as militant and inflexible, their actions were nonviolent and were carried out with respect. For instance, after a resolution had been reached, the occupiers asked that they be given more time to leave the building so that they could properly clean up after themselves. Some of the students who had used administrator's desks left notes thanking them for their use. One student reportedly left money on a desk to pay for the box of crackers he had eaten during the takeover. The students had not forgotten the example of their role models. They had combined the "by any means necessary" doctrine of Malcolm X with the nonviolent tactics espoused by Martin Luther King, Jr.

1970 was an eventful year at Williams. The college trustees ended 1969 with a discussion on coeducation, a controversial issue for men's colleges. Once again Stephen R. Lewis made headlines by drafting a memo, "The Case for Coeducation," which gave five reasons why Williams should allow women to enroll. These ranged from pluralizing the educational community to culturally enriching the campus with the opposite sex. The memo was a success, and soon afterward Williams welcomed its first group of women to campus. Students also responded to the tragedy at Kent State University, where four students were killed by National Guard troops during a spring antiwar demonstration. The faculty and students at Williams voted for a symbolic strike in protest of President Nixon's escalation of the Vietnam War.

By graduation, the black students of the class of 1970 had left their mark on Williams. Many had been involved in the occupation of Hopkins Hall the previous year. The most influential member of the class was Preston Washington, who was responsible in part for changing the college's policy toward black students. Washington graduated with highest honors in political science and went on to pursue his passion for community and pastoral service. As co-founder of the Harlem Congregations for Community

Improvement, Washington helped organize more than 90 congregations committed to the redevelopment of Harlem. He died in 2003 of heart failure. Members of the BSU paid tribute to Rev. Washington with a floral arrangement to express their appreciation for his trailblazing leadership.

With the rise in the numbers of black students at Williams came the assumption that they would be assimilated into the general population without much difficulty. But in 1972 the WAAS was seen by many not as just another student organization but as a separate community. Because of the apparent isolation of the WAAS from the mainstream community, rumors arose concerning its aims and, in particular, its financial requirements, which had become a contentious (and somewhat confused) issue the previous year.

During the years 1970-1975 both blacks and whites were recovering from the Hopkins Hall occupation. There was a general feeling of racial unrest on campus, and another incident (albeit on a somewhat smaller scale), in 1972, would again bring charges of racism and unfair practices to the forefront.

On 25 February 1972, members of the WAAS occupied the snack bar for nearly two and a half hours to “expose the overt racial abuses aimed at black students and the organizational inadequacies of the college snack bar.” The WAAS had asked for support for a boycott of the snack bar, where tensions had been rising for some time. Among the students’ demands were that action be taken against snack bar employees who exhibited racist attitudes towards blacks. The students alleged that black patrons were served smaller portions and treated with less courtesy than others. In addition, in a letter to provost Joseph Kershaw, the WAAS alleged that water balloons had been thrown at black students on the freshman quad, a beer bottle had been thrown at a black student (Bill Berry ’73), and that the word “nigger” had been written on the wall of the Society’s office.

At noon on the 25<sup>th</sup>, about 30 black students passed out leaflets announcing the action, asked snack bar patrons to leave as soon as they had finished eating, then entered the snack bar and barred its doors with tables. Dean Neil Grabois repeatedly told the

students that disciplinary action would be taken against them if the demonstration lasted more than half an hour. The students decided that the action should last at least past the half-hour deadline.

Of the changes in the snack bar following the occupation, the institution of a ticket system for ordering and picking up food—still in use today—seems to be the most significant. Many white students felt that the whole incident was overblown; some pointed out that the snack bar's employees showed a bad attitude towards any student, black or white, particularly during rush hours. They argued that any sensitive person might well feel discriminated against from time to time. However, the administration agreed to set up a grievance committee featuring at least one member of the WAAS.

In November 1972 the BSU and the Office of Career Counseling hosted a unique event: the Black Professionals Career Conference. More than 100 black Williams students as well as students from neighboring schools participated in discussions with black professionals in the fields of medicine, science, education, law, business, and urban affairs. An effort to provide direction for professional life after graduation, the conference blossomed out of discussions held the previous summer concerning the value of a college education in the work force. Participants in these discussions concluded that little was being done to prepare students for life after Williams except through the BSU and cursory orientation sessions. The conference included discussions of the benefits of graduate study and alternative ways of entering the work force (for example, by taking advantage of the need for teachers in Africa). The Black Alumni Conference, which takes place now during homecoming, is a direct link to this seminal event.

## CHAPTER 9: DECISIONS, DEBATES, AND DANGER

In February of 1977 the Committee on the Academic and Social Life of Black Students (hereafter the Committee on Black Students) at Williams was chartered and subsequently met regularly to discuss admissions policy, academic counseling, black-white relations, and the selection of junior advisors. The committee was formed after a review of the records of black students disclosed concerns about this segment of Williams' population. These concerns included a perceived reduction in inner-city recruitment, a weak support system for first-year black students, and the need for better academic counseling in the upper class years.

About two months after the formation of the committee, an opinion piece by Tony Cornett in the 8 April 1977 issue of the *Williams Record* charged the college basketball program with racism. The allegation sparked a debate that lasted through the end of the school year. Cornett wrote that "black athletes here at Williams who have tried, unsuccessfully, to play basketball in the program have been good enough, and would have played if circumstances were different" (i.e., had they not been black). The piece pointed out what Cornett called a mainstream hypocrisy that existed at the top of the basketball program. "It's very difficult," he goes on, "for a coach to emphasize unity among team members while allowing a man's color to determine the extent of playing time he receives."

The Cornett piece provided an interesting allegory to the black student experience at Williams: were black students being denied an equal education because of the color of their skin? In the days following Cornett's allegations, students lined up on both sides of the issue. Some were adamant in their defense of coaching at Williams; others empathized with the plight of black students.

The first rebuttal of Cornett's charges came in an article by Andy O'Donnell that appeared in the same issue of the *Record*. Titled "But Can They Play?", O'Donnell's piece dismisses Cornett's claims, calling them insubstantial and characterizing them as "an emotional reaction by a freshman basketball player."

The following week brought three more pieces that challenged O'Donnell's dismissal of Cornett's allegations. In a letter to the editor in the 19 April *Record* Ronald

C. Long wrote: “That racism and prejudice are an enigma to many whites comes across poignantly in the narrow article” written by O’Donnell. Long speculates that O’Donnell’s expectation that blacks will excel in basketball is based unwittingly on color, and is therefore racist—even if unconsciously so. He exhorts the Williams community not to dismiss the issue but to investigate the claim of racism in athletics.

The other two letters that appeared in the same issue of the *Record* also took O’Donnell to task. Bruce Goerislich ’80 takes issue with the tone of O’Donnell’s letter, calling it “at the very least, grossly insensitive.” He attacks O’Donnell’s “paternalistic attitude” and points to the “whispers of condescension” in O’Donnell’s argument and ends by writing, “Race is a very sensitive issue and it behooves us to move with recognition of our own potential for ‘discreet’ bigotry.”

In the third letter, which appeared in the “Viewpoint” section of the paper, Clarence Otis, Jr. ’77 told readers that racism was not limited to athletics at Williams, but pervaded the entire community—including the pages of the *Record*. He turns O’Donnell’s title, “But Can They Play?”, on its head with his own title, “But Can They See and Will They Ever See?” For Otis, the relevant issue in the debate is the inability of many to recognize instances of racism. He rejects O’Donnell’s assertion that there are few talented black athletes at Williams by citing the accolades earned by blacks in track and wrestling, sports “where individual achievement is judged quite objectively [and where] there is little room for subjective evaluation by coaches.” He names a handful of black athletes whose achievements never made the paper, and argues that the *Record* is with the majority at Williams who perpetuate racism’s “nasty attitude.”

In May 1977 the Committee on Black Students reported on its work during the spring semester and disclosed its plans for continuing discussions in the fall. The report’s three main topics of concern were admissions policies, relations between black students and the faculty, and the curriculum. The committee stressed to the Office of Admissions the necessity of strengthening Williams’ commitment (affirmed by a faculty vote in 1968) to

recruit and admit significant numbers of academically qualified black students, and asked that consideration be given to the idea that the composition of Williams' black student body should reflect the social and economic diversity of blacks in the larger society.

Recognizing the decline in the quality of inner-city high schools, and acknowledging the intense competition for a relatively small pool of black students, the committee offered an alternative to the college's recruitment focus on integrated suburban high schools: let black alumni and current undergraduates assist in attracting black applicants to Williams. It also recommended that the Office of Admissions develop contacts within black communities—in churches, fraternal organizations, and the like—as a way of reaching talented potential applicants.

In the fall of 1977 the committee made plans to discuss the following topics:

- tutoring services
- charges of racism in the Athletics Department
- the BSU as a supportive academic resource for black students
- the relationship between the dean's office and black students
- social relations between black and white students

The issue of relations between white faculty members and black students was also discussed at length in the committee, the principal benefit being an exchange of information between the two groups, in the course of which each side learned a lot about the opinions and perceptions held by the other. After examining these mutual attitudes, behaviors, and misconceptions, the committee expressed confidence that they could make changes that would increase the learning opportunities for black students at Williams.

A consensus of black student perceptions included the following criticisms:

- White faculty think of black students as academically inferior, less intelligent, and unwilling to work. One indication of this viewpoint is the surprise shown by a white instructor when a black student performs well.
- White faculty members sometimes appear to be uncomfortable, uneasy, indifferent, or negative in the presence of black students.



- It is felt that sometimes a black dimension or a black insight is ignored in a course in which it might be appropriately introduced.
- White faculty appear to blacks to be unwilling to entertain alternative ideas which reflect black concerns; for example, they may disregard black students' contributions and impose penalties (i.e., lower grades) for papers on subjects important to black students but with which the instructor may be unfamiliar.
- The tendency of white faculty to think in stereotypes of black students prevents proper consideration and treatment of them as individuals because they are more conspicuous than white students.

The committee felt that sensitivity to the perceptions of others, in the difficulties just described, was an important first step in alleviating the problems and in correcting errors of judgment and behavior. In its report, the committee offered specific suggestions to initiate the kind of communication it had in mind:

- Instructors should actively seek out students who are doing poorly and offer them advice and assistance. This initiative would make clear the instructor's concern. Contact of this sort would be particularly helpful to freshmen, especially if made before warnings were officially issued.
- Where appropriate, departments should organize meetings with declared black majors to discuss curricular matters, advising services, and student morale.
- The BSU should initiate informal meetings in Mears House with members of specific departments to meet underclassmen. Upperclassmen with declared majors could be instrumental in organizing and conducting this kind of meeting, which would provide opportunities for informal encounters not usually possible in the classroom or office.

The committee also made recommendations regarding the curriculum. Its major concern was the extent to which the experience of African Americans and other minorities were incorporated into the college curriculum. They proposed broadening the curriculum to include the African American experience in courses in politics, art, music,

history, and economics. Including this kind of material would help sensitize white students and introduce them to the varied aspects of the Afro-American experience, the role of blacks in American society and culture, and the central issues facing blacks and American society as a whole. (It is interesting to note that nowhere in its recommendations did the committee ask for the creation of an African American studies program, limiting their discussion to the integration of Afro-American elements into already existing courses.) The report closed with a recommendation to the college to make the recruitment and retention of black faculty its highest priority: “Their presence as educators, colleagues, counselors, and role models is clearly essential to the educational health of the institution.”

The 16 September 1977 issue of the *Record* carried a full page article detailing the committee’s findings. The committee’s investigations, said Dean of the College Peter Berek, “were a look at our successes and failures” in dealing with black-white relations at Williams. The article notes that the board of trustees had discussed the report at its June meeting and had “perceived it as a matter of concern.” Berek added, “They felt that it was a matter to be dealt with by the students, faculty, and administration,” while seeing their own role in the matter to be one of “general review and oversight.” A copy of the board’s memorandum was included in the article

In the fall of 1977, a Supreme Court civil rights decision prompted a flood of opinions in the pages of the *Record*. The Bakke case, in which the Court decided in favor of a white man who claimed to be the victim of reverse discrimination, struck a chord with blacks and whites alike. A *Record* editorial said, in part, that the “social values of special admissions programs overshadow the ‘unfairness’ Bakke argues they contain,” and concluded that the argument for reverse discrimination contains a “fundamental weakness.”

Another *Record* editorial suggested that the Bakke ruling could have significant implications for Williams because of a special admissions program the college had had in

place since 1963. In his inaugural address in 1961, Williams president John E. Sawyer suggested an experiment in which approximately 10 percent of an entering class would be admitted on the basis of criteria different from the prevailing quantitative standards. The new admissions criteria reflected a growing national concern over the primacy of quantitative data—test scores—to the exclusion of other indices of performance.

Williams administrators and faculty settled on five categories of performance to determine who would be accepted under the program:

- *special academic flair*
- *overachievement* (strong performance in secondary school despite low aptitude test scores)
- *potential “late bloomer”* (mediocre performance in secondary school despite high aptitude test scores)
- *very strongly recommended* by secondary school teachers and others who know the student well
- *extracurricular strengths*

In its 1977 editorial, the *Record* quoted Philip Smith’s 1976 *Alumni Review* article, “The Ten Percenters,” in which he said that “during a decade when college campuses went from ‘silent’ to turbulent and back to quiet again, most 10 percent students were sensible, participating citizens on the side of evolutionary change, eager to obtain the benefits of an education.” Defending the University of California Medical School at Davis’s affirmative action program a year later, the *Record* argued that “training minority physicians may be the best solution to the problem of undersupply of doctors serving minority populations. The 10 percent program [at Williams] epitomizes a positive trend in higher education: the movement away from admissions based on grades and scores alone, which tends to exclude members of minorities and students skilled in areas that are not reflected by these criteria.”

Other contributors to the debate responded affirmatively to the Bakke decision, arguing that special admissions programs rested too heavily on claims of “social value” alone.

To take the discussion on affirmative action a step further, the Committee on Black Students met with Smith to discuss the college's efforts to attract qualified black students. He described his plans to target five cities—Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Chicago—for special attention by black alumni and undergraduates who would assist in recruiting efforts and “enhance” campus visits by prospective black applicants.

The *Record's* editorial board reacted negatively to this proposal, chastising the committee for their “subservient conformism.” The editors went on to say that “the minority group of black students has eagerly contributed in perpetuating both a private enterprise ... and an educational system ... which ultimately cannot afford to mentally liberate its members.” They argued that it was impossible for Williams to attempt to establish a microcosm of American society while at the same time promoting the development of harmonious relations between the antagonists. Many students wrote in response, supporting the committee and taking the *Record* to task for what some called its “pseudo-Marxist posturing.”

Soon thereafter, Xanthe Berry '81 renounced his membership in the BSU, writing in the *Record* that the BSU's membership policy, which excluded white students, directly contradicted the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, which, he said, “strove for harmonious multi-racial communities.” In response, Avon Williams '81 added his voice to the debate, writing in the *Record* that “White America does not hear my cries of joy and anguish. It is deeply ingrained in the subconscious that we are still savages ... When I want to express my pride, where do I go? To my white friends? I think not. As altruistic and kind and well meaning as they all are, they don't even recognize the prejudice within themselves.”

The debate over the Bakke decision revived when recent graduate and Harvard Medical School student Thomas Gates '76 introduced the idea that that candidates who were accepted over Bakke at the University of California may have been better qualified. His remarks came after a *Record* opinion piece purported that many of the minority students admitted to UC Davis were “unequivocally unqualified.” Gates challenged the

notion that the problem the Bakke case addressed was as simple as qualified students being rejected in favor of unqualified students. His argument—that the case was about the allocation of scarce resources—put forward the idea that colleges and universities had a social mandate to assume that capable *minority* students could best help society meet the goal of providing a scarce resource, in this instance, a medical school education. Gates quoted the legal scholar Charles Lawrence: “Bakke does not have an equal protection argument; he was not excluded because of the color of his skin, but because there were others who could do the job better.”

Poet Haki R. Madubuti (Don L. Lee), lecturing at Williams during Black History Month in 1979, brought a black nationalist perspective to the campus when he said that blacks in America “have moved from wearing the original slave dress of butt-naked with chains to the more accepted tie and shirt or skirt and blouse. Many drive big cars and some live in big houses ... However, for the majority of black people, the economic, political, and cultural status has yet to change to any degree ...”

Also during Black History Month, a seminar on the Harlem Renaissance was announced by professor of English Melvin Dixon. Open to students with an interest in Afro-American studies, Dixon’s course was designed to explore the cultural achievements and examine the racial spirit that marked the beginnings of the black consciousness movement. Dixon expressed concern over the lack of interest shown by Williams towards Afro-American studies in general and refuted the notion that such studies were not academically viable, arguing that they provided a hitherto unavailable perspective. (Student Kathleen Kelliher expressed her concern over the lack of interest in African American studies by white students in an article in the *Record*, saying that in order to gain insight into American civilization, “a course on the black experience is almost essential.”)

In the aftermath of the Bakke decision, the college began its search for an affirmative action officer. Acknowledging that Williams was unusual for its lack of such a position, President John Chandler said that he hoped the creation of the office would help

the college examine institutional patterns and address specific problems related to the hiring and retention of female and minority employees.

An October meeting between the BSU and the college's board of trustees renewed communication between the groups after years of indirect contact. While the administration cited progress on the BSU's most recent proposals, many members of the BSU felt that progress was lackluster at best. BSU secretary Cheryl Martin '82 wrote bluntly, "We feel that the same adverse institutional conditions which precipitated aggressive action on the part of black students in 1969 remain in 1979." Along with a discussion on a renewed commitment to recruit minority students and faculty members, the trustees and the BSU also discussed the status of the Afro-American studies program. The trustees fielded requests for the hiring of a tenure-track African historian, the establishment of an endowed chair for a prominent minority professor in any department, and the establishment of a chair for the Afro-American studies program.

Augustin Hikinson '80 contributed to the continuing critique of academics at Williams when he wrote that the history department and Committee on Appointments and Promotions' (CAP) dissolving of an assistant professorship in African history "effectively terminates the department's developing program in African studies." He contested the CAP's avowal that the decision was based on low enrollment numbers, saying that the figures did not tally with those held by the registrar's office.

In November of 1980 the college was faced with an incidence of what is recognizably the most egregious act of terror against blacks in America: a cross burning. The cross was ignited in front of Perry House late at night—timed, apparently to coincide with a BSU party in adjacent Weston House. BSU members expressed concern that the perpetrator might be a Williams student; administrators felt it was possible that the responsible party was not a student. A rally held on the Monday following the incident drew about 1,200 students, faculty, and staff. Students and administrators alike denounced the act.

The campus community responded to this ugly incidence of racism with more solidarity and openness than it had in the past. President Chandler called for a moratorium on classes in the near future so that discussions on racism could take place. The events of the preceding days, he said, had shown that “enough people were distracted and distressed that the college’s purposes as an educational institution have been undercut.”

On the Wednesday following the cross burning, the BSU library in Mears House was broken into and ransacked. Tables were overturned and books were strewn across the floor. Three days later, many black students received anonymous telephone calls, some of them threatening and obscene. According to one account, a caller said, “I know what you’re doing, I don’t like it. I know who all the nigger leaders are. I know where you live.” One student received seven phone calls. Black students reported being taunted from the windows of college buildings.

Students and President Chandler received threatening notes. College Council leader Darrell McWhorter ’81 found a note pinned to his door that read, “Let’s call a spade a spade.” Muhammad Kenyatta ’81 received a letter that stated, “You God damned stinkin’, filthy, black skinned Monkeys do Not belong among a white human society. You shit colored animals will eventually be phased out. In plain English—Eliminated.” The note was signed, “KKK.” President Chandler received a similar letter in the same handwriting.

Ray Headen ’82, a BSU coordinator, told the *Record* that black students were frightened and upset. “Anything might have happened,” he wrote. “It was a tinderbox for a while. The threats were an intimidation, trying to get people to not raise the issues. We need to get people talking.” At a service of rededication and recommitment at Thompson Chapel, Chandler said, “All of us had hoped that by this time the tensions stemming from the cross burning would have subsided. But they have been exacerbated in the past two days.” On the day of the moratorium, a crowd of 1,300 students filled Chapin Hall and overflowed into Brooks-Rogers. The students then dispersed into 30 discussions held in classrooms all over campus.

In the wake of the moratorium, talks arose again on the need for Afro-American studies and more black faculty. The CAP considered the institution of an Afro-American 101 course. While interested in such a 100-level course, President Chandler expressed the view that other priorities might take precedence. “Curriculum may not be the most effective response. We really need more black faculty,” he said in a *Record* article.

The Reverend Muhammad Kenyatta returned to Williams in 1980—14 years after he left school to take up civil rights work—to finish his degree. He was now a 36-year-old senior with a family. His wife Mary worked in administration. Kenyatta became deeply involved in the discussions that followed the cross burning and returned to Williams after his graduation to give a talk on the anniversary of the event. Compared to the huge turnout of the previous year, however, only about 75 people attended the talk.

A January 1982 survey revealed what many people already expected to discover: black students at Williams were less satisfied than whites with their college experience. Even so, minority applications increased by 50 percent, a rise Admissions Director Phil Smith attributed to the minority recruitment weekend held in conjunction with the BSU.

In March the BSU was criticized after refusing to allow three white students into a party at Mears House. While some BSU members later said they felt it was hypocritical for an organization that purported to educate others on black issues to take a separatist posture, others maintained that black students should have their own space on campus. Dean of the College Daniel O’Connor clarified the college’s policy:

Any student organization is permitted to hold functions and meetings restricted to its own membership. Students who are not members of the BSU generally understand that they can attend functions at Mears only as invited guests. On the other hand, social functions of any student organization which are open to any guests may not exclude a non-member on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.



Black History Month featured a talk by James Turner, chair of the African Studies Department at Cornell University, who spoke on the problem of recruiting and maintaining black faculty at predominantly white colleges. He urged members of the BSU to look after their educational interests by helping ensure the hiring of black faculty at Williams.

In October, Kenyatta returned to Williams to discuss a boycott he had organized as leader of the Harvard Black Law Student Association (BLSA). In an attempt to get the law school to hire more minority professors, BLSA members had persuaded Harvard administrators to reinstate a course on constitutional law and minority issues. The course was reinstated, and scheduled to be taught by visiting professor Julius Chambers. However, Chambers asked his colleague Jack Greenburg of the NAACP to teach the course. Because the law school made no effort to hire another black faculty member, Kenyatta and the BLSA moved to boycott the course.

When Mears House was reapportioned as office space in May, the BSU became temporarily homeless. Originally promised Jenness House, the BSU finally moved into its current space in Rice House (also home to the Students of Caribbean Ancestry) which features office space, a common room, and an apartment for the college's Gaius Charles Bolin Fellow.

## CHAPTER 10: ENTERING A NEW ERA

The fall of 1984 brought many changes to Williams. Trustee Clarence Otis, Jr. '77 was chosen by alumni to administer the Tyng Bequest, which allocates money for financially needy students. In October, Michael Knight '77 returned to Williams as visiting professor in the Department of Theatre. As an undergraduate, Knight had served on the committee responsible for formulating the theater major specialization. After graduation, Knight was awarded a Watson Fellowship to study African theater in Nigeria and Ghana for a year. He then earned his master's degree at the Yale School of Drama. Upon his return to Williams, Knight directed the first all-black production of Jean Genet's *The Blacks* and developed a course in black theater. Sadly, he succumbed to a brain tumor in 1987.

The history of nonviolent resistance was the focus of a course developed for introduction in 1985, "Non-Violence and Social Change." Initially suggested by students in 1982, the course concentrated on four major themes: political power, the spirit of nonviolence, spirit and the political aspects of nonviolence, and the future of nonviolence.

In the winter of 1985, Lionel Bolin '48, director of employee relations for the National Broadcasting Company in Chicago, was elected to the college's board of trustees. Lucienne Sanchez '79, resident physician at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C., was nominated as Tyng administrator.

Cornel West, professor of the Yale Divinity School and former member of the Williams Department of Religion faculty, opened Black History Month on February 6<sup>th</sup> with a discussion of the deterioration of blacks' academic status since the Civil War. He argued that further corrosion be addressed with four options: a defensive attitude toward studies, a revolutionary stance, post-modern skepticism, and building on the best of the western humanist tradition.

An instance of racial tension appeared in an interview with Robert Lee '87 in the 5 March 1985 issue of the *Record*. Voicing his grievances over the perception of the college community's maltreatment of African Americans, Lee said, "Being black is especially difficult at Williams ... Sometimes I'm not even acknowledged by people." Threats of cuts in financial aid also galled students and faculty who, on March 8<sup>th</sup>, rallied

behind organizer Christopher McGuire '86 to protest federal cuts supported by President Ronald Regan. Secretary of Education William Bennett '65 supported the president's budget cuts.

The Central Intelligence Agency received a friendly welcome when it visited campus in mid-March to interview seniors. But CIA representative Steven Conn encountered a different kind of greeting when Nzingha Clarke '86 and Martin White '87 attempted to arrest him outside the Office of Career Counseling. The students' rationale for the failed citizen's arrest was the CIA's alleged illegal involvement in Nicaragua.

In October, Williams College Dance Program coordinator Sandra Burton introduced the Dance Festival, an effort which represented the first collaboration of its kind between Williams and North Adams State College, Bennington College, and Berkshire Community College.

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Anti-Apartheid Coalition formally protested Williams' South Africa investment policy at a rally on the steps of Chapin Hall. In coming months, the Anti-Apartheid Coalition, the BSU, and the Advisory Committee on Shareholder Responsibility would link the college's South Africa investments to racism at Williams.

A noticeable drop in African Americans enrolling at Williams since 1979 was noted in the 21 January 1986 *Record*. According to its report, in 1979 40 out of 109 accepted applicants enrolled. By 1985, only 22 out of 73 accepted applicants registered. Director of Admissions Phil Smith called the decline a national trend, citing African Americans' recent interest in community, junior, and technical colleges. Reductions in federal funding for educational programs such as Upward Bound were also seen as possible causes for the decline in enrollment.

Martin White discussed the lack of support systems for blacks at Williams in the same issue of the *Record*. Speaking as a junior advisor, White maintained that "Through subtle hints you're told you shouldn't be too friendly with other blacks. You should try to fit in." In an attempt to alleviate frictions, the BSU and the administration sought better facilitated discussions with junior advisors prior to the arrival of first-year students. White, a College Council member, WCFM board member and community affairs

director, BSU coordinator, and political science liaison, lost his bid for president of the College Council.

In April 1986 the College Council endorsed the Williams Student Divestment Association's (SDA) construction of a "shantytown" on Baxter lawn during Parents' Weekend. The construction was designed to raise awareness of the college's investment in Caterpillar, Inc., which does business with the government of South Africa (and whose bulldozers are said to have been used to destroy the homes of poor South African blacks). President Francis Oakley's agreement to three of the four proposals put forward by the SDA—enlargement of the college's collection of written materials on divestment, additional funding to bring speakers on divestment to campus, and space in the *Alumni Review* for debate on investment/divestment issues—led to the dismantling of the shantytown after eight days. President Oakley also conceded to the demand for the creation of an investigative committee to explore the financial repercussions to Williams of divesting in South Africa.

By the fall, however, unrest returned. Eight members of the Anti-Apartheid Coalition, reacting to the college's refusal to divest in companies doing business with South Africa, erected 159 grave markers on Baxter lawn to commemorate those who had died in the previous three years' struggle to defeat apartheid in South Africa. Five of the crosses were painted red in honor of blacks killed in the township of Soweto. The BSU declared the assembly of the crosses a second civil rights movement.

The college's first Bolin Fellowships, inaugurated during Oakley's tenure, were awarded in June to Roland Anglin, a graduate student in political science at the University of Chicago, and Wahneema Lubiano, a graduate student at Stanford University. (Lubiano subsequently left Williams after her 11-year-old son Jefe was physically and psychologically abused by other children in an incident at the Williamstown Youth Center.)

Averil Clarke '87, in an opinion piece in the *Record* titled "Leaving a Cloud of Anger Within," described his feeling of being invisible at Williams. Members of the BSU released a letter to the campus community articulating their frustration over the alleged

mistreatment of black students, lack of a diverse structure at Williams, and administrative apathy in racial matters. The students demanded a meeting with President Oakley and Dean of the College Stephen Fix, the creation of a grievance committee to respond to complaints of racial intolerance, a campus-wide program to combat racial intolerance, and a program of racial education as a component of freshman orientation.

May of 1987 brought two important announcements: the appointment of Bolin fellows Shanti Assefa (who in 1988 accepted a tenure-track position at Williams) and Rafia Zafar, and the imminent return to campus of Dennis Dickerson, associate professor of history and chair of African American studies, who had been teaching at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. In June, the first five-week Summer Science Program was launched. Designed to provide training for incoming minority freshmen interested in medicine or the sciences, the program offered morning and afternoon classroom and lab sessions in chemistry, mathematics, English literature, and expository writing.

Late in 1987 a lectureship was established to honor Allison Davis, valedictorian of the class of 1924 and a pioneering anthropologist and psychologist. Davis's 40-year career at the University of Chicago was distinguished by his seminal investigations of the influence of social and economic factors on the education of poor children and helped create a basis for the ending of legalized racial segregation in the United States. Among his numerous honors was service on the President's Commission on Civil Rights.

Administrators and students clashed again in March 1988 after a group of students released a 1983 letter from African American faculty to then-dean of faculty Oakley deploring the college's dedication to affirmative action. Twenty-four members of the Coalition Against Racist Education met with administrators to present their demands, but the college's failure to comply prompted several dozen students to occupy the dean's office on April 21<sup>st</sup>, during Parents' Weekend.

The occupying students presented the following demands: a mandatory course in minority history or culture; a minority special assistant to the president; the creation of a non-voting minority chair on the Committee on Appointments and Promotions; an increase in recruitment and scholarships for blacks and latinos of low socioeconomic

status; maintenance of two minority visiting professorships; one black and one latino tenure-track professorship; funding for the BSU for a Michael Knight memorial; and a percentage of black and latino faculty reflective of those groups' numbers among students.

After President Oakley met with 17 students to discuss the issues, some concerns were addressed. Oakley supported a divisional requirement to acquaint students with American minorities and the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The college also introduced four scholarships to support students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In the fall of 1988 leaders in the Black Alumni Network undertook a campaign to establish the Sterling A. Brown '22 Professorship, which honors one of Williams' most distinguished black alumni. Under the guidelines of the professorship, visiting scholars would teach, work with students individually, and contribute to the awareness and growth of the Williams community.

Six civil rights activists were awarded honorary degrees in late 1988: congressman John Lewis, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, broadcast journalist Charlayne Gault, and educator and community activist Ruth Batson. Soon thereafter, the new Multicultural Center opened in Jenness House with a mandate to serve minority and foreign students, function as a resource and community center, and help educate the Williams community in matters of race and diversity.

Johnetta Cole delivered the Commencement speech in the spring of 1989. An anthropologist and president of Atlanta's Spelman College, Cole also received an honorary degree. José Calero of the Bronx was awarded the William Bradford Turner Citizenship Prize. In significant appointments, Lisa Cash was installed as the Black Alumni Network chief, and Preston Smith joined the administration as associate dean, in which capacity he advised minority students and functioned as a liaison between student organizations and campus committees.

About 100 of Williams' 520 African American graduates turned out when Reunion Weekend '89 honored the centennial of Gaius Bolin's graduation from Williams. An African American landmark was established during the weekend when artist Faith

Ringgold was commissioned to craft a narrative quilt depicting Williams' African American history. In preparation, Ringgold interviewed countless alumni, students, and black Williamstown residents—including Margaret Hart, descendant of a Williamstown family that had befriended and housed black students in the days when blacks were not allowed to live on campus. (Sterling Brown and Allison Davis were two students who benefitted from the family's friendship and support.) The finished quilt's main scene presented Williams personalities and townspeople from 1889 to 1989 enjoying a picnic, with Gaius Bolin presiding.

A racially charged incident in March 1990 resulted in an 18-year-old Mount Greylock High School student being charged with assault and battery on two African American Williams students. Peter Lyn and Alexander Howard were physically and verbally attacked by the high school student in the Colonial Pizza shop on Spring Street.

Another ugly incident occurred in September 1991. The *Record* reported that visiting assistant professor of theatre William PopeL. had found the words "Nigga Shit" written on a sign-up sheet for his course in black drama, with an arrow pointing to the course title.

Earlier in 1991, three latino students staged a hunger strike to draw attention to the need for a latino studies program within the history department. Previous proposals, put forward in 1987, had failed to capture the interest of the administration. The strike brought promises of a tenure-track position supported by a nationwide search for worthy candidates. In a related development, Bolin Fellow Gladys M. Jiménez-Muñoz, invited to teach a course on American women of color, was denied an interview when she applied for a position with the college in 1993. Despite student intervention—including a hunger strike that the students called "a visible manifestation of a relationship which fails to nurture both parties"—Jiménez-Muñoz was not hired. On 27 April 1993 the administration conceded to students' concerns by creating a faculty advisory group for student concerns as well as a latino studies search committee.



## CHAPTER 11: MOST RECENTLY ...

The BSU began the 1993 school year with new leadership. The board was chaired by Kimberly Thomas '94 and served by Justin Lewis '94 (political education), Jebrell Glover '95 (communications), Kila Weaver '94 (security), Woodley Auguste '96 (MinCo representative), Mecha Brooks '94 (cultural), Debra Coleman '95 (treasurer), Ebony Chatman '99 (secretary), and Kisha Kai Miller '97 (first year representative).

The fall brought administrative changes as well. Stephen Sneed came to Williams from Washington State University–Pullman to become associate dean of the college. His mission was to help the college advance multicultural education and assist with the needs of the minority community at Williams. At the same time, Thomas Deguzman-Kreuger was named director of the Multicultural Center (MCC), but left Williams within a year.

Two distinguished black men were honored at convocation. August Wilson, an award-winning playwright and poet, and Preston Washington '70, president and CEO of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, received honorary degrees. Wilson, the author of *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*, has won many awards for his plays, which seek to illuminate the black experience in America. In addition, Michael Reed '75, formerly an assistant director of admissions, was honored at the college's bicentennial celebration.

In October a newly-renovated Rice House opened. Besides new carpeting, lighting, and wallpaper, the house's amenities included a kitchen, classroom, television room, and office space for the BSU board.

History professor Shanti Singham was offered tenure in December 1993. Singham received her education at Swarthmore and Princeton, and began her career at Williams as a Bolin fellow.

Events leading up to the 1994 celebration of Martin Luther King and Black History Month included lectures in November and December by two black men, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin and the popular rapper KRS-One. Ervin talked about his experiences in the Black Panther Party; KRS-One's talk, "Street Knowledge," centered on growing up homeless in the streets of the Bronx.

Black History Month was ushered in by Soyini Madison, keynote speaker for Martin Luther King Day, who lectured on women of color. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, a postage stamp honoring Allison Davis '24 was unveiled by his family. Later in February, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., delivered a lecture titled, "Will the Real Multiculturalism Please Stand Up?" Not long after Gates's appearance, the black community at Williams was shocked by the news that professor of history Reginald Hildebrand was leaving Williams for an appointment at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. Hildebrand delivered the baccalaureate in May. The following day, Cornel West, professor of religion at Harvard, was given an honorary degree. West had visited Williams in 1982 as the Henry Luce Professor of Religion.

Fall of 1994 brought more speakers on the black experience to Williams. Kathleen Cleaver, formerly active in the Black Panthers, talked about the organization's goals and methods and described the role of women in the movement. A week later, professor of Judaic studies at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst Julius Lester delivered a lecture titled, "Blacks and Jews: A Reassessment."

Among successful candidates for tenure in December was professor Kaye Husbands Fealing of the Economics Department, whose specialties included pricing strategies of the auto industry and innovation in emerging markets. At the same time, professor Thandeka of the Department of Religion was denied tenure despite appeals on her behalf.

Black History Month 1995 was celebrated in part by the performance of a play, "And It Still Got Lost," in which famous black women tell their stories. Rachel Hoover '97, Taschon McKeithan '95, Tammy Palmer '97, Elizabeth McCray '98, and Bahia Ramos starred in the all-black production.

Williams' 106<sup>th</sup> commencement featured scholar, lecturer, teacher, and jurist A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., and Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of the vocal group Sweet Honey in the Rock. Higginbotham, who died in 1998, had an astonishing career as chief judge emeritus of the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals, professor of jurisprudence at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, long-time teacher, mentor, and

advisor at the University of Pennsylvania, and lecturer in law at Harvard Law School, among other distinctions. Reagon, a composer, historian, and scholar who held the title of Distinguished Professor of History at the American University, also served as consulting composer and performer for the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize*.

In September the African-American Studies Department sponsored a symposium on the centennial of Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" speech. Leading the symposium, "Strategies of Black Development: Reassessing Booker T. Washington's 1895 Atlanta Compromise," were professors Alex Willingham, David L. Smith, and Ian Berry. In October, BSU members staged a demonstration in Baxter, wearing signs around their necks to protest racial incidents and the defacement of posters, among other things. Students called the action "an opportunity for us to respond to racism and ignorance that we will not tolerate."

Northwestern University professor Charles Payne came to Williams in November to deliver a speech titled, "Strong People Don't Need Strong Leaders: Ella Baker and the Civi Rights Movement." Payne taught at Williams between 1977 and 1981.

In 1996, Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, and spring lectures featured speakers both conventional and controversial. Tim Sams, director of the Multicultural Center, delivered a speech titled, "The Philosophy and Strategy of Martin Luther King, Jr." Professor of history Craig Wilder and professor of political science Alex Willingham also gave speeches in honor of King. For Black History Month, the BSU invited Nation of Islam minister Conrad Muhammad to speak at Williams. The evening proved to be controversial, as Muhammad made what were considered anti-Semitic remarks during his talk. In the spring, Tony Martin delivered a lecture on "The Battle of Black History," and celebrated African American author Ishmael Reed read selections from his poetry and novels.

In November, Ebony Chatman '99 organized CRACKDOWN, a controversial week-long project intended to help explore allegations that the CIA had distributed drugs to inner-city neighborhoods in the 1980s. A "crack culture" was instituted on campus with rock candy used as a substitute for the drug. On the first day, participants packaged

the candy while watching the film *New Jack City*. On the second and third days, the candy was distributed and participants began to “push narcotics” in the community. By the fourth day, vials of “crack” were all over campus. Days five and six featured a “crack kills” campaign and a war on drugs. The experiment concluded with a forum in which the participants discussed the week’s events.

Williams’ step team Sankofa, formed in the fall of 1996 by Maxine Lyle, Samantha Reed, Dahra Jackson, Melina Evans, and Mya Fisher, had its debut performance on Martin Luther King Day in 1997. Black History Month followed with its theme, “Black Love.”

The 1997-98 school year began with a new BSU board, which included members Elizabeth McCray, Taaman Osbourne-Roberts, Jeanteal DeGazon, B. Mike Woltz, Maxine Lyle, Nickolass Sophinos, Adrienne Denison, Samantha Reed, and Jason Mirach. The group welcomed Yolanda Rucker of Russell Sage College as a two-year student activities intern.

Former Surgeon General Joycelyn M. Elders visited Williams in November to deliver a lecture titled, “Health, Education, Equal Access: How Will America Fare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?” Star Parker, a public policy and media commentator, spoke on “Can We End the Culture of Dependency? Alternatives to Welfare for Underprivileged Black Americans.” Parker had once been a recipient of welfare. A new BSU tradition was established in November when Maxine Lyle ’00, in an attempt to get the black community to come together, introduced the BSU Community Dinner. The invitations brought BSU students, less-involved black students, and professors together in Currier Ballroom.

January 1998 saw assistant MCC director Derrick Mohammed and Navine Girishankar ’93 hosting Martin Luther King Day. In February, Cornel West returned to Williams to deliver a lecture titled “The Struggle Continues,” and in April Williams hosted the centennial celebration of famed actor and singer Paul Robeson.

The college’s celebration of Martin Luther King Day was complemented in 1999 with community events and assemblies at local elementary and high schools. Julian

Bond, former chair of the NAACP, gave a speech in Thompson Chapel titled, “Civil Rights: Then and Now.” Robert Johnson-Smith, grandfather of Royce Smith ’01 also participated with his “Letters to Martin Luther King, Jr.”

The theme of Black History Month was “Dimensions of Blackness” and featured a viewing of the BSU archives in Rice House—a project created with the assistance of historians Evin Steed and Robert Griggs. It included the restoration of the library and the inclusion of documents from the BSU’s predecessor organization, the Williams African American Society. The library was dedicated to the memory of Alana Heywood ’92. Professor David Smith spoke on the history of the house and discussed his experience at Williams. In mid-February, Earl Ofari Hutchinson came to campus to speak on “Countering Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes.”

By the end of the year, two black professors had cited personal and professional reasons for leaving Williams. History professor Dennis Dickerson went to Vanderbilt University, and Grant Farred of the English Department took a position at Duke University.

The 1999-2000 school year marked the entry into the new millennium. The BSU was chaired by Royce Smith and included Adwoa Boahene, Dwight HoSang, Jason Lucas, Chabeth Haynes, Franklin Reynolds, Lennie Trocard, André McKenzie, Robert Griggs, and Rita Forte. Several notable speakers opened the year: Stephanie Wilson, an astronaut and a native of Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Carrie Mae Weems, the Sterling A. Brown ’22 Visiting Professor; and Cornel West, who discussed racial fragmentation in his talk, “Restoring Hope.”

In January 2000 assistant professor of history Kenda Mutongi was named a fellow at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College. The \$40,000 fellowship allowed professor Mutongi to finish her book, “Widowhood, Colonialism, and Gender: Everyday Narratives from Western Kenya, 1895-Present.” Mutongi, who was also awarded a Faculty World Fellowship for the 1999-2000 academic year, took her Ph.D. in African history from the University of Virginia in 1996.

The campus hip-hop group Nothing But Cuties and veteran rappers Run-DMC preceded and followed Black History Month 2000 with its theme of “Past, Present & Future: Envisioning the Hereafter.”

Martin Luther King Day was celebrated in 2001 with keynote speaker Christian Dorsey’s speech, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Legacy in the New Millennium,” a candlelight vigil, and readings at Williamstown Elementary School. Dorsey is executive director of The Reading Connection, a nonprofit organization that provides literacy programs for homeless children in the Washington, D.C. area. Wayne Smith, a lecturer on the racial bias in the administration of capital punishment, also spoke during the month. It was announced that professor Craig Wilder would receive tenure at Williams.

The Black History Month theme for 2001 was “Redefining Black Love.” The month was celebrated with a racial diversity summit orchestrated by class of 2001 students Royce Smith and Jennifer Geiger. Dr. Mildred Johnson, the first African American woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School, came to campus to speak on abortion.

William H. Gray III, president and chief executive officer of The College Fund/United Negro College Fund since 1991, received an honorary degree from Williams. André McKenzie ’01 was elected class speaker. A few weeks later, Robert Bullard gave a lecture on environmental justice and Claude Steele, professor of psychology at Stanford University, gave a talk on “How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Academic Performance.”

Despite these positive events, the year ended on a jarring note. The *Mad Cow*, a campus magazine of satire, published an article that some considered racist and which offended members of the college’s minority community. After a protracted debate, which included a proposal in the College Council to “de-recognize” the organization, the magazine’s status was left in limbo.

## IN CONCLUSION

Well over a hundred years have passed since Gaius Bolin, Williams' first black student, joined the ranks of his fellow freshmen in 1885. Since then, hundreds of talented young people of African descent have passed through the halls of this institution, most as students, others as educators. While here, and in their lives after graduation, they have applied themselves both to their studies and to serving their communities with diligence and consistency.

As this document shows, their tenure here has at times been an uneasy one—and sometimes ridden with tensions. Not even the “Purple Bubble” is immune to race issues; it has seen its share of upheaval and misunderstanding. But there have been many moments of triumph when the entire campus has banded together to celebrate the accomplishments of the many students, faculty, and staff of African descent who achieved excellence here, and who have since continued their excellent work all over the world.

It is to preserve and celebrate the history—both the bitter and the sweet—of black students at Williams that thirteen students took on the research and writing for this project: Dayna J. Baskette '03, Karina J. Davis '05, Jeffrey E. Delaney '05, Aquilah S. Gantt '05, Shannon A. Gopaul '05, Rene Hamilton '05, Robert Michelin '03, Jamaal B. Mobley '04, Estelita Nimoh-Boateng '05, J. Nicole Perkins '05, Christopher J.P. Sewell '05, Toni-Ann Thomas '03, and Sharifa T. Wright '03.

It is the hope of all the students who have contributed to this manuscript that this work will be added to and improved upon, so that one day there will exist an even more detailed and extensive—and ongoing—biographical history of Williams' black alumni.



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