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The destruction of a black institution: a political economy of Fisk University, 1977-1984

Keith L. Jennings
Clark Atlanta University

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This study examines the internal workings at Fisk University from 1977-1984. The main aim is to uncover several hidden factors contributing to the demise of the historically Black colleges and universities in the United States.

The mission, place, and historical role of the challenges at Fisk University and the manner in which they were dealt with are presented. The period 1977-1984 is investigated because unlike other critical periods in the University's history, the issues which propelled the institution to the point of crisis are clearest and contain many important lessons relevant to the present, especially
as they relate to the struggle for survival of the historically Black colleges and universities.

The findings suggest that the failure of the Fisk Board of Trustees to be more involved in the governance of the university at a broader spectrum, along with their view of a contemporary education and the educational mission of a "Black college" led to the systematic destruction of the institution. Moreover, the board's views were contrary to the conjunctural and strategic educational needs of African American people in the United States of America.
THE DESTRUCTION OF A BLACK INSTITUTION:
A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FISK UNIVERSITY
1977–1984

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
KEITH LAMAR JENNINGS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY 1994
ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

JENNINGS, KEITH L. B.A., FISK UNIVERSITY, 1981

THE DESTRUCTION OF A BLACK INSTITUTION:
A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FISK UNIVERSITY, 1977-1984

Advisor: Dr. T.D. Boston

Thesis dated July, 1994

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Acknowledgements

The continued encouragement of Dr. Boston, Dr. Boone, Dr. Makidi and the kind assistance of Ms. Beth Howse of Fisk University's Library Special Collections were invaluable in completing this paper. I would like especially to acknowledge the heroic contributions and activism of countless student leaders who stood up in a courageous effort to protect the historic legacy of Fisk University. These students brought to life the meaning of the saying, "to know is to acquire the responsibility to act."
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CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED EVENTS AT FISK UNIVERSITY 1977–1984

- Walter Leonard inaugurated as Ninth President of Fisk University, September 1977
- Freshman Visitation Eliminated, January 1978
- South African Anti-Apartheid March Held in Nashville, February 1978
- Fisk Union Strike Begins, September 1978
- Students occupy Jubilee Hall to Protest Poor Living Conditions, October 1979
- Jacob Jiles Incident Takes Place, October 1979
- Memo Released on Campus Security and Changes in Living Arrangements, March 1980
- Fisk Student Strike Begins, March 1980
- Fisk Board Approves Tuition and Fees Increased By 41%, May 1980
- The Dean of the Chapel, Dean and Provost of the University and Five Faculty Members' Contracts Not Renewed After Student Boycott, June 1980
- Fisk Faculty Assembly Report Outlining Crisis at the Institution, Rejected On Procedural Grounds By Leonard's Office and the Board of Trustees, May 1981
- Walter Leonard Received Unanimous Vote of Confidence by Fisk University Board of Trustees, a $7,000 Raise and a New Five Year Contract Over Objections of Student Body, Faculty Assembly and the Nashville and Boston Fisk Clubs Who Had Earlier Supported His Candidacy, February 1982
- Committee to Save and Reconstruct Fisk University, formed January 1983
- Paper Published and Circulated Urging Leonard Ouster, March 1983
- Fisk Faculty Votes "No Confidence" in Leonard Administration, April 1983
Unity Committee Established at Fisk, April 1983
Robert Kean Resigns as Chair Trustees, May 1983
Timothy Donaldson, Governor of the Bank of the Bahamas and Fisk Graduate, Selected as Chair of Board, May 1983
Fisk Faculty Issues Second Report to Board Outlining Crisis at the Institution, May 1983
Emergency Board Meeting Held to Determine Whether Fisk Will Open in Fall, July 1983
Student Initiated Fundraising Campaign to Get Heat Turned On, Began October 1983
Walter Leonard Resigns As Ninth President of Fisk University, November 1983
Fisk Board of Trustees Accepts Leonard's Resignation, Relieves Him of All His Duties Immediately, February 1984
Dr. Robert Satcher Named Interim President, February 1984
Fisk Placed on Financial Probation by Southern Association on Colleges and Schools, May 1984
Harry Ponder Hired as Tenth President of Fisk University, May 1984
U.S. Government Department of Education Issues Reports on Fisk, August 1984
Timothy Donaldson Resigns in Protest as Chair of Board of Trustees, May 1986
CHAPTER ONE

THE DESTRUCTION OF A BLACK INSTITUTION:

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FISK UNIVERSITY 1977-1984

In an essay entitled, "Whither Now and Why," the prominent African American sociologist and human rights activist, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, suggested that one of the possible outcomes of the rapid changes taking place in the United States might be the theoretical disappearance of the historically Black colleges and universities. DuBois argued that while the success of the early civil rights movement was very important in securing full citizenship rights, a negative by-product of the "success" might be the failure on the part of African Americans to appreciate their own history and culture. In Dr. DuBois' opinion, the fight for equality should not mean cultural assimilation. In his critical style, he said:

As I have said before, the final settlement of the racial problem will not occur by getting rid of the Negro race...forgetting the slave trade and slavery...(and) the whole cultural history of Africans in the world...What we must do is to lay down a line of thought and action that will accomplish two things: the utter disappearance of color discrimination in American life and the preservation of African history and culture as a valuable contribution to modern civilization.

In order to articulate and accomplish the above, Dr. DuBois believed the Black educational institutions would

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2Ibid., 150.
occupy a special place in that process. He reasoned, while contemplating what desegregation would mean to Black people and their struggle, that while African Americans ought to fight for equality in all aspects of life, especially in education by attending previously segregated white colleges, they at the same time had to maintain their own institutions of higher learning. These schools, in DuBois' opinion, should remain Black on a voluntary basis. In short, DuBois' statements reflected the line of struggle needed for a progressive Black mandate in education. The main contents of such a mandate were the promotion of the continued development and existence of African American culture, and a greater democratic movement within the society as a whole.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the mission and historic role of the Black colleges and universities must be clearly defined, articulated and understood if ever such a set of objectives is to be achieved. However, the mission of the historically Black colleges and universities, is perhaps one of the more misunderstood subjects in United States educational circles, thereby leading to a questioning, even by some of their so-called supporters of the continued need for these institutions. One reason for this is the lack of a radical and popular Black critique of the current socio-economic crisis in the United States and its impact on the future educational opportunities for the

\[^{3}\text{Ibid., 152.}\]
African American community. Hence, the possibility for the destruction of Black social institutions, especially colleges and universities, seems more real today than in 1960 when DuBois was writing, "Whither Now and Why." Moreover, given the present conservative climate of educational policy, many of the administrators and Boards of Trustees of historically Black colleges and universities are finding it necessary to abandon or modify the original goals and missions of their institutions to attract new financial and political support.

It is difficult to assess whether or not fundamental changes might have already occurred. However, the existence of new partnerships with governmental and corporate entities does suggest a willingness to initiate new programs, some of which may not be in the best interests of the institutions, especially their ability to project a critical and independent attitude toward the present social order and its negative impact on the life chances of African American people.4

Perhaps the unfolding process will show that those who move rapidly to redefine missions blindly, may be inadvertently signing their own death warrants. In other

4The numbers and different types of corporate and government programs on Historically Black College campuses have increased significantly. This has come about mainly through the encouragement of federal agencies to conduct more business with Black colleges as outlined in the Reagan White House initiative.
words, could such a process produce a scenario, wherein the very institutions to be saved are, in fact, systematically dismantled or destroyed by neglecting the moral imperative of the intellectual pursuit by an oppressed people subjected to an intense ideological assault on their very personality and identity. Whatever the case may be, the situation in which most historically Black colleges and universities find themselves has led to a desperate search for new ways of survival.

The present conditions which characterize most historically Black colleges and universities include inadequate funding, declining enrollments, increasing tuition fees and aging physical plants. In addition to these conditions, one cannot forget the existence of a hostile policy environment at the highest levels, surrounding the continued existence of the institutions.⁵

The foregoing, once again, proves that Dr. DuBois was very perceptive. Yet what is more compelling, in demanding our investigation, is the fact that most policy discussions regarding the present debate on the survival of Black colleges, overlook the increasing trend toward reduced higher educational opportunities for African Americans in

general and African American males in particular. Many believe that since more than 70 percent of the Black students pursuing higher education are doing so at predominantly white colleges and universities, the need for the historically Black colleges and universities should be questioned.\(^6\)

However, many white and Black policy makers involved in the debate surrounding the struggle for the survival of Black colleges and universities, speak euphemistically of desegregating racially identifiable institutions, i.e., the Black colleges. Many of those same policy makers, especially in the southern United States, seem able to overlook the continued existence of the almost blatant racial exclusivity practiced by many traditionally white institutions of higher learning.

When challenged on this fact, some policy makers blame the existence of the historically Black colleges for their failure to meet federally determined goals for enrollment at traditionally white institutions, which are kept that way, more and more, through focusing on "quality" and higher entrance standards measured by culturally-biased standardized tests. As a result, entrance or access today

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is dependent upon acculturation in addition to how much money one's parents can afford.

The one exception to this unwritten rule is the African American athlete. The African American athlete, in this "color blind" institutional world exists as a necessary commodity. He or she produces enormous revenues, such that they easily reproduce themselves and further contribute to the continued existence of the same racist and class bias structures that exploit their talents and skills in the first place.

As mentioned above, the logic currently being promoted in educational circles suggests that given the "successful desegregation of higher education" in the United States, historically Black colleges are not needed. It is also argued that they are no longer necessary because they were created to educate Blacks when they could not attend other institutions of higher learning. Moreover, if they are to exist, then logically their original mission is no longer to educate and provide advocacy for a race of people largely ignored by the society in general.7

In order to compete with the traditionally white institutions for "qualified" students, it is argued, the mission must therefore be radically altered. Understanding the philosophical basis of this logic and assessing the

practical implications of implementing such logic, is one of the main aims of this analysis.

The current group of administrators at the historically Black colleges and universities are confronted with a set of circumstances and challenges that are very complex and often require enormous amounts of energy to address critical issues of survival, on an almost daily basis. Many of these administrators rightfully point to the existence of a hostile policy environment; a philanthropic community less willing to provide needed assistance, spiralling education costs and a decreasing appreciation for the institutions among graduates and the African American community in general.8

One area that has received little attention, from a critical perspective, has been the internal workings of the institutions as contributing factors to the crisis now confronting many historically Black colleges and universities. For those concerned with ensuring the survival of these institutions, all the hidden factors contributing to the impending demise of the Black colleges and universities must be addressed thoroughly. Toward that end, a critical analysis of Fisk University, one of the more acute cases of a Black institution struggling for its survival, is in order.

The educational crisis in the United States is beginning to receive more and more attention as it deepens and becomes more apparent. The existence of more than 30 million illiterate citizens attests to this fact, with a large percentage of minority youth being functionally illiterate. With respect to higher education of the United State's largest minority group, African Americans, the crisis' impact in this sector gained wide attention as the situation at Fisk University received national focus including presidential candidates visiting and/or issuing statements during their primary campaigns in 1984. The crisis at Fisk, a Black private institution, contained aspects of all the challenges confronting the Black colleges and universities as a whole.

It is ironic that Dr. DuBois' alma mater would be one of the Black colleges facing not only the possibility of theoretical disappearance, but also the possibility of being demoted from the ranks of viable productive academic institutions altogether. Fisk University's struggle for survival and the current status of the historically Black colleges and universities in the American social order is the subject of this study.

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9President Reagan contributed $1,000 to Save Fisk Campaign. Walter Mondale commented on how important Fisk was and Rev. Jesse Jackson traveled to the institution to deliver a speech.
STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to investigate, analyze and explore the extent to which internal contradictions and the manner in which they were addressed, propelled Fisk University to the crisis it confronted in 1984. In our view, the period from 1977-1984 is most deserving of our attention as it provides several important lessons relevant to today. This is because it was during that period that the internal crisis at the institution was pronounced. Moreover, we seek to discover how the crisis in turn provided the window of opportunity for the abandonment of the historic mission of the institution, and what impact that will have on the future development of Fisk University.

The destruction of the historically Black colleges and universities must be critically understood by those who would seek to halt this assault. Hence, it is important to uncover the extent to which the impending death of these institutions is being caused not only by external forces, but also by internal antagonism. In the past, most attention has been given to the role that external forces play, yet little mention has ever been made of the potentially detrimental role certain internal forces can and have played.
HYPOTHESIS

The working hypothesis of the study is that the lack of leadership, initiative and vitality on the part of the Fisk Board of Trustees, and its refusal to become involved more intricately in the governance, management and financial operations of the university on a broader level, allowed an incompetent administration to preside over the almost systematic destruction of the institution. The administration, in turn, manifested its unchallenged authority in a most unnecessarily antagonistic manner, which exacerbated the already existing internal contradictions within the university's structure, as well as creating others. In addition, because of this, the already existing external contradictions were able to exert their influence more fully, thereby speeding up the process of destruction.

METHODOLOGY

The research being undertaken in this study is of an interdisciplinary nature. The data collection aspects of the methodology employed here include the collecting of relevant academic studies, publications by public and private sources, governmental documents, newspapers, magazines, journals and conference proceedings. The analysis by former students, faculty and administrators also provide an important source of primary materials.
As a theoretical frame of reference to help guide the research we have selected dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism is used because it is the most appropriate tool of interdisciplinary social science investigation. It allows us to identify the various contradictions that existed at the institution and to place them in their proper context, that is, those which were principal and those which were secondary, as well as the particular and most important aspect of each of the identified points of contention. This frame of analysis helps one view the development of phenomena in their totality as processes, through their interconnectedness and as a unity of opposites. In short, we are able to grasp the essence of the problem instead of a simplistic psychological explanation of behavior. It is my view that a psychological rationale, for otherwise unexplainable behavior, is undesirable because one could easily explain away the reason for certain actions without really investigating, beyond the subjective shell of an issue, to its objective core. As it relates specifically to our topic at hand, this approach to analyzing reality will allow us to test the stated hypothesis, by pointing out the contradictions and the interplay between them, as represented by the Fisk Board of Trustees; the administration; the faculty; the student body and the alumni with respect to the governance of the institution.
OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into ten chapters. Chapter One consists of the introductory remarks, statement of the research objective, hypothesis, methodology, outline of the study and a note on the scope, limitations and importance of the study.

Chapter Two is the review of related literature, especially as it relates to the demise of educational opportunities for African Americans and the possible futures of the historically Black colleges and universities.

Chapter Three is a critical assessment of the educational crisis in the United States within the context of the current socio-economic crisis, and the changing demands being imposed upon educational institutions by the social order. It is in this chapter that a brief analysis of the government philosophy on education which affected Fisk University is critiqued. In addition, present trends in education are outlined, with special attention being given to the implications that both the existing philosophy and the changing reality are having and will have on the educational opportunities for African American students.

Chapter Four is an examination of different scholars' views on the cultural and historical mission of Black colleges and universities. Special attention is given to the view of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois whose long life was so closely
associated with the history and development of these institutions.

Chapter Five is an objective analysis of Fisk's historic place in Black higher education and its history of funding and enrollment problems prior to the identified period.

Chapter Six outlines the problems associated with the governance, organizational structure, campus social life, and the various components of the institution during the identified period. This chapter also presents an analysis of the unfolding struggle to save Fisk University.

Chapter Seven briefly observes the process that was initiated to "save Fisk," pointing out the strengths and weaknesses and revealing how it became possible for the Reagan administration, through the United States Department of Education, to intervene in the process, utilizing Fisk University as a showcase for its government philosophy on educational funding and institutional survival.

Chapter Eight traces the development of federal government intervention, the establishment of a special task force by the United States Department of Education and the eventual development of a Management Assistance Project for Fisk University.

Chapter Nine consists of a critical examination of the "Fisk Method" and the stated implications for other
institutions at risk, contained in the Management Assistance Project Five-Year Plan entitled: "A Future for Fisk".

Finally, Chapter Ten is a summary of the findings, and the elaboration of certain conclusions drawn from the analysis along with several recommendations as they relate to the question of mission and the future educational needs of the African American community.

SCOPE, LIMITATION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This analysis considers the period between 1977-1984. Obviously, many of the problems outlined had their origins well before the designated period. Moreover, the study in no way seeks to be "the" definitive work on the subject of what occurred at Fisk University, or how well the institution is attempting to reconsolidate itself with the aid of the federal government. However, given the promotion of the Fisk Method by the federal government as a model for "institutions at risk," this study will be an important contribution to the literature on Black colleges and universities. Moreover, the research shows how the theoretical approach derived from radical political economy can be applied to the field of education. This study is also important because the conditions which existed at Fisk University are reproduced over and over again by similar types of administrative bodies under the directorship of alienated boards of trustees.
It is the sincere desire of the researcher, who was a member of the Fisk University Board of Trustees (1981-1984),\textsuperscript{10} that the objective lessons contained within this study will be of some assistance to those who might find themselves confronting similar problems.

\textsuperscript{10}See Appendix C for a full listing of Fisk University 1983-84 Board of Trustees.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

DEMISE OF BLACK HIGHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE 1980s:
A FOCUS ON HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The debate surrounding the continued existence and viability of the historically Black colleges and universities is once again a topic of concern in United States educational circles as it was in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹ One main difference in the debate today, however, is the growing awareness on the part of progressive African American educators of an obvious declining commitment by the federal government and major white institutions to access and equity in higher education for African Americans, coupled with the fact that this is occurring at a time when demographic changes in the composition of the United States population, (especially college eligible age category), are being dramatically altered. The purpose of this chapter is to examine a few of the positions and ideas relating to the changing environment and the possible impact these changes may have on the future

¹See for instance, Harvard Educational Review 37, (Winter 1967); Special issue on Historically Black Colleges; and Daedalus, 100, (1971).
possibilities of the historically Black colleges and universities continued existence.

Manning Marable has argued that if indeed the decline of Black colleges was the product of accelerated desegregation of formerly all white institutions, one might be less concerned. Ironically however, "the collapse of Black schools and cutbacks in tenure-stream positions for young Black faculty are occurring precisely at a time when white colleges are reducing their numbers of Black professors and administrators." In fact, African Americans were the only minority group to show a decline in the number of faculty positions between 1977 and 1983. Faculty positions held by African Americans decreased from 19,674 (4.4%) to 18,827 (4%), a loss of 4.3%. The American Council on Education said the following regarding this situation:

Blacks are definitely losing ground at four year institutions...the number of Blacks teaching full time at the two year level increased by 3.4 percent at public and 7.2 percent at private institutions. This does not off-set the loss at the four year level. Of the 12,000 full-time faculty employed in traditionally Black institutions, 8,200 are Black. This fact has sobering implications for Black faculty members proportional representation in predominately white institutions. Overall representation of Blacks in predominately white institutions is only 2.3 percent...Black representation in administration appears to be in a state of flux. Between 1979 and 1981, it declined from 7.4 to 6.8 percent and increased from 6.8 to 7.2 percent in 1983.3


3Wilson and Mendez, Minorities in Higher Education, 10.
The chart below provides a brief glimpse of this reality.
TABLE 2.1

FULL-TIME FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND TYPE OF INSTITUTION

<table>
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<th>Private</th>
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<td>4-Year</td>
<td>2-Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>-11.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
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Administration

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
The participation rate of African Americans decreased the most during the period of 1980-85 as Figure 2.1 below reflects.
College Enrollment Rate
Black High School Graduates
1976-1986

Source: Department of Education
Moreover, this occurred at the same time the high school completion rates by African Americans were generally increasing (as Figure 2.2 below displays). Hence, more students were actually available to pursue higher educational opportunities. Several factors are responsible for this apparent contradiction. Four of these factors which must be mentioned as related barriers to access were: the decline in federal student aid; inadequate academic preparation for college; the increased cost of higher education; and the impact of the changes in admission standards. The perceptions of African American youth on the role of higher education in bettering their life chances is a related factor but is outside the scope of this analysis.
Black High School Completion Rate

1976-1986

Fig. 2.2

Source: Department of Education
What is interesting, is the fact that during the period under investigation, African Americans not only lost ground to whites in all categories, but they also lost ground to other minorities with respect to rates of participation.

In order to properly contextualize the debate, attention must also be given to three other fundamentally important areas: 1) the present role the historically Black colleges and universities are playing within American higher education; 2) the societal context within which the institutions exist and operate; and 3) the declining opportunities for African Americans to obtain higher education or professional training at institutions of higher learning in the United States. In this chapter, we address the first and third of these important areas, prior to reviewing several of the more salient views of the possible future position and role of the historically Black colleges and universities from a historical and contemporary point of view. In Chapter Three, we will address point two listed above more specifically and its implication for African American students and historically Black colleges and universities.

Historically Black colleges and universities comprise less than four percent of the higher education institutions in the United States.\(^4\) However, they enroll close to seventeen percent of all African American college students.

\(^4\)Ibid., 13.
and also graduate a disproportionately large number of African Americans in higher education.\textsuperscript{5} In fact, more than fifty percent of all baccalaureate degrees earned by African Americans are awarded by Black colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{6}

In addition, thirty-three percent of all masters, eleven percent of all doctorates and thirty-eight percent of all first professional degrees awarded to African American students between 1976–1981 came from historically Black colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{7}

While these statistics say a lot about the ability of the institutions "to do more with less", they also implicitly speak to the dismal failure of white institutions to retain and graduate African American students. The table below outlines the degrees, by type, awarded by historically Black colleges and universities during a one-year period (1986–87).

\textbf{TABLE 2.2}

\begin{center}
HBCU'S CONFERRED DEGREES BY TYPE 1986–1987
\end{center}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{6}]Wilson and Mendez, \textit{Minorities in Higher Education}, 13.
\item[\textsuperscript{7}]Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
According to a 1985 study by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, an income breakdown of the student population currently attending historically Black colleges and universities reflects the following:

Thirty three percent (33%) of all historically Black college and university students come from families with incomes of $6,000 or less; twenty-three percent (23%) come from families with incomes between $6,000 and $12,000; eighteen percent (18%) of all historically Black college and university students are from families with incomes between $12,000 and $18,000; and twelve percent (12%) are from families with incomes between $18,000 and $24,000.8

These figures obviously indicate a greater dependence, by African American students, on financial aid to attend college, especially in light of the increasing tuition costs. In fact, it has been estimated that nearly 85% of

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all historically Black college and university students are participating in the Pell Grant Program, with 54% receiving a maximum Pell Grant Award in 1985.\textsuperscript{9} Secondly, it indicates a large dependence on that same aid by the institutions which tend to receive less from tuition for their operating revenue to educate these students. Figure 2.3 depicts graphically the extent to which the historically Black colleges and universities enroll an extremely high, if not the highest, percentage of working class students attending any type of higher education institution in the United States.

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
Household Incomes of HBCU Students

Fig. 2.3

- $6,000 or less: 33.0%
- $6,001-12,000: 23.0%
- $12,001-18,000: 18.0%
- $18,001-24,000: 12.0%
- $24,001 and above: 14.0%

Source: NAFEO
What this means is that historically Black colleges and universities receive a larger percentage of their revenues from the federal government than do all higher educational institutions. One should also note that more than 20 percent of total historically Black colleges' and universities' revenues come from the federal government, in contrast to slightly less than twelve percent of the revenues received by all other higher education institutions. However, this difference occurs despite recent trends in which the federal share of historically Black colleges and universities revenues fell faster than it declined for all institutions—nearly a 30 percent drop between 1979-80 and 1985-86 as Table 2.3 and Figure 2.4 display.

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10Ellis and Stedman, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 7-8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>600,785</td>
<td>683,495</td>
<td>794,270</td>
<td>838,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuition/fees</strong></td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fed. Gov.</strong></td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Gov.</strong></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loc. Gov.</strong></td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gifts/contracts</strong></td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endowment/income</strong></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Education
Decline in Federal Support to HBCUs

Source: Department of Education
The Director of Financial Aid at Mississippi Valley State University, commenting on his school's loss of approximately $100,000 in federal student aid said, "If we had the money, we might have had 200 to 300 more students."  

Stanley Smith, former President of Shaw University, has characterized the Black student's situation as being "one of lack of income flexibility, poverty, structural unemployment, chronic unemployment, neglect and deprivation," which has forced Black college students into a situation where they are financially strapped and almost completely reliant upon federal student assistance.  

The redefining of the nature of federal assistance by the Reagan/Bush administrations did considerable harm to Black students and colleges. In fact, as a result of the initial round of cuts in funding to education, the historically Black colleges and universities, (especially the private ones), experienced on average a twelve percent (12%) decline in student enrollment. Moreover, "a comparison of enrollments for fall 1981 and fall 1987 shows that, of the overall drop in historically Black colleges and

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universities students, some 63 percent occurred in the private historically Black college and university sector."\textsuperscript{13}

During the 1960's perhaps the one article that generated the most publicized reaction, with respect to questioning the existence and continuing need of the Black colleges, was written by two white social scientists, Christopher Jencks and David Raesman. Even though the two had questionable knowledge and familiarity with historically Black colleges and universities, their work was published as definitive research in the Harvard Educational Review. Their article, entitled "The American Negro College", suggested that most of the Black colleges were academic disaster areas which were incurably inferior and hence were of no "noteworthy" significance to the higher education community in the United States. Their prescribed solution therefore, was to explicitly state that the vast majority of the colleges should be closed, with others being converted into junior colleges or technical schools, while a few should be enhanced as major colleges and supported. The latter schools, which the authors even named, were of course the few prestigious historically Black colleges and universities that had been responsible for producing a large part of Black middle class leadership.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Ellis and Stedman, \textit{African American Participation}, 5.

\textsuperscript{14}Christopher Jencks and David Raesman, "The American Negro College," \textit{Harvard Educational Review}, 37, no. 1,
Raesman's gratuitous suggestion that "there will always be a substantial number of Negroes who want a B.A., who are willing to do what they are told to get one, but simply cannot meet the modest standards of even the least selective white colleges" was indicative of the racist view of historically Black colleges and universities compared to white colleges and universities.

The Jencks and Raesman article obviously ignited a fury of debate and reaction. Its blatantly racist overtones enraged and offended many. A number of noted Black educators responded. These responses ranged from apologetic discourse to militant opposition to the accusations leveled against the institutions. Dr. Benjamin Mays, then President of Morehouse College, was one of those who responded militantly. His views were representative of the majority of respondents. He said:

The Jencks-Raesman article on the American Negro College leads to no constructive end. After reading the article twice, I failed to find the purpose for what it was written. The authors give a tiny bit of hope to nine or ten Negro colleges; but all of the rest, possibly 114, they describe as incurably inferior. The article is not the result of thorough research. The authors developed no research design that would be impressive to scholars in their field. Jencks and Raesman are really saying that despite the need, the distinguished leaders these colleges have produced, the increasing enrollment...that various states, the federal government, foundations and corporations will not give adequate support to Negro colleges. Are they spokesmen for these agencies, telling Negroes what has already been

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decided? If this is so, since these colleges by design have been kept on 'short grass', some for a hundred years, such a design would represent a kind of racism which the United States should not want to live with.¹⁵

Shortly afterwards, encouraged by the numerous student strikes across the country generally, but specifically by Black college students at Black colleges calling for a more relevant education, interest in the special role of historically Black colleges and universities was again renewed.¹⁶

One of the most important intellectual products derived from this period was a series of articles written by several noted Black scholars drawn from different academic disciplines. These articles attempted to focus the debate surrounding the continued existence of the Black colleges and universities, in particular, regarding what the future of the Black colleges might be. The collection was presented in DAEDALUS, the noted journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science. Two of the more notable articles were written by C. Eric Lincoln and St. Clair Drake.


In his article entitled, "The Black University in The American Social Order," Drake outlines the complexities associated with any analysis of the place and role of Black colleges in United States society. He chronicles the origin and development of the institution in the following manner:


Drake suggests:

The origin and development of institutions of higher education for Negroes in the United States has been directly related to the existence of a system of slavery in the South from 1660 to 1865, and to the caste system that replaced it, as well as to the widespread existence of racial prejudice on campuses of Northern universities and colleges prior to the 1950's. It has thus been part of what Gunnar Myrdal has analyzed as 'An American Dilemma.' With the dissolution of the caste system in the South, as a result of the civil rights movement and the concurrent change in the racial policies of Northern colleges and universities, a reassessment of the function of Black institutions of higher education had been taking place.18

Drake goes on to say that the future of the historically Black colleges and universities will be organically linked to the changing structure of race relations within the context of changes taking place in the American social order. Drake's review of the different


18Ibid., 834.
periods shows us the origins and changing face of the Black college and university.

He concludes by arguing that perhaps the primary role of Black colleges and universities, the overwhelming majority of which are in the South, may well turn out to be "preparing the generation now growing up for maximum opportunities for the economic and social development of Black Southerners."19

C. Eric Lincoln, in his article, "The Negro College and Cultural Change," asserts that the battle of the twentieth century will be to keep the historically Black colleges and universities alive and viable.20 He says:

Some men are still smiling in fine superiority convinced more than ever before that Negro education was indeed a strange mistake and continues to be so.21

Lincoln argues that the Black college is an institution born of the turmoil of war which made Black people free with an imperfect freedom, established in a social environment hostile to its presence and committed to its destruction.22 The Black college, he argues, survived and became one of the singular assets of the Black community's unique, valuable, contributing component in the educational complex of

19Ibid.


21Ibid.

22Ibid., 606.
America. More than that, Lincoln believes that the historically Black colleges and universities is an instrument of freedom. Black freedom.\textsuperscript{23}

Lincoln further states that American cultural bias will have to be changed if the Black colleges are to grow and flourish.

"There are those who call for the end of the Negro college on the grounds that they are no longer needed. The absurdity of such a suggestion is matched only by the difficulty of finding the financial means to continue them. The argument is that if they do not voluntarily commit an honorable hari-kari, then the alternative is slow dishonorable atrophy and death. Further it is said that Negro colleges have never been competitive financially or academically, and that now, since practically all white colleges of any repute are now least nominally open to Black students, and increasingly to Black professors, the Negro college can only expect the continued debasement of student body and faculty..."\textsuperscript{24}

In addition, he suggests that a system of national colleges could be one answer to the Black college dilemma, in spite of the existing bias.\textsuperscript{25} The Black colleges, he argued:

...could capitalize, rather than destroy the rich cultural heritage of Black America. It could do much to re-establish American ties with Black Africa and broaden the opportunities for sharing a vital element of our national subculture. One school, such as Howard, could represent the national focus on Third World Studies—economics, politics, foreign services, medical research, and training with an African or Third World

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 624.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 627.
orientation. Another, perhaps Atlanta University or Tuskegee, might become that national center for research in every aspect of Black slavery and its consequences—for example the economics and psychological effects of racism...Fisk could be the national institute concerned with the art and culture of African and Afro-American people. Each national center or institute might have any number of satellite campuses utilizing the facilities and faculties of existing Negro colleges. Rather than have the Negro college retreat into oblivion, it seems to me that the times require, and offer them, an expanded role in the American academic enterprise. Change is the order of the day. The Black National University is the logical successor to the private Negro college in the common interests of all Americans.26

More recently, a number of other important views have been articulated and entered into the continuing debate. We shall briefly review a few of the more salient observations relevant to the present study.

One of the major issues conditioning the debate on the continued existence of the historically Black colleges and universities is the legacy of the Adams v. Califano public schools decision, or in other words, the issue of desegregation. The Adams mandate rendered by the federal courts called for the following: 1) the dismantling of the segregated and dual system of higher education in selected states; 2) the enhancement of the under funded traditionally Black institutions; 3) the elimination of duplicate programs

26Ibid.
and 4) the increase, conversely, in each set of schools, of Black and White students, faculty and administrators.\textsuperscript{27}

According to the American Council on Higher Education, the post-Adams picture looks different than that projected or intended and has had a rather ironic effect. For example,

When the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed the Adams case, Black enrollment at predominately white institutions was 4.3%. In 1982, this had increased to 9.4%, which represents 63% of total Black enrollment in the 19 Adams states. However, in 1976, 12% of the historically Black college enrollments comprised students of other races. The increase of non-Blacks in the historically Black colleges and universities during this period accounts for most of the overall growth in the historically Black colleges and universities. The Black population in faculty positions between 1977 and 1983 declined in all but seven Adams states. In addition, although state appropriations to historically Black colleges and universities increased, they increased in a lesser proportion when compared to appropriations to predominately white institutions. Among four-year public institutions in the Adams states, appropriations increased 62% for non-historically Black colleges and universities and 48% for historically Black colleges and universities between 1971 and 1981.\textsuperscript{28}

The American Council on Education Office of Minority Concerns concluded from the foregoing that "although most of the Adams states are making progress in enrolling more Black students in traditionally white institutions, the total participation of Blacks is decreasing in the majority of

\textsuperscript{27}Wilson and Mendez, \textit{Minorities in Higher Education}, 13.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
these states. The net effect is that fewer Black students are receiving a college education in these states."29

Kenneth Tollett has referred to this development as "upside down justice." In fact, he has, in trying to locate the origin of the assault against historically Black colleges and universities, asserted that the key case in the modern civil rights struggle is the place to begin. According to Tollett, Brown v. Board of Education, has been turned on its head.

Although Brown v. Board initiated the egalitarian revolution of the late 1950s and the 1960s principles [which] developed in the progeny of this case pose a clear and present danger to the survival of predominately Black institutions of higher learning. Brown's beneficial impact upon the galvanizing thrust of Black social, political and economic aspirations are difficult to overestimate. Yet, it would be a perverse and paradoxical turn of constitutional law development if the seed of Brown produced the vines which smothered the identity, historic mission and the very existence of predominately Black colleges and universities.30

Tollett's reference above is with respect to the results of policies implemented supposedly to meet the guidelines of court rulings. The example of Tennessee State University will suffice here. In its interpretation of eliminating dual systems of education or "racially identifiable institutions", the Board of Regents of the

29Ibid.

State of Tennessee decided that Tennessee State University—Black since its inception—should become fifty percent white by 1991 in the areas of administration, faculty and student body. In addition, small but significant issues, such as the campus Queen, Ms. TSU, appearing in Ebony magazine's annual issue which chronicles historically Black colleges and universities campus queens was not allowed. This was the case primarily because, Tennessee State University, according to them, was no longer a "Black University." This policy is being implemented through various means, including the use of incentive grants for white students to attend the institution while African American students search desperately for financial assistance. Moreover, this was suggested at a time when the University of Tennessee at Knoxville had less than 5% of its more than 36,000 student population being Black, and the largest population of [Black] staff was not on the faculty or in the administration, but among the janitorial services and grounds crews.31 As Tollett argued, this situation certainly seems upside down.

Professors Michael Adams and Ricky Hill have argued in their article, "The Critical Need," that the elimination of the Black colleges has taken on three primary forms: unitary structures, cross index enrollment and financial

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31Student demonstrations continued at Tennessee State University around the consolidation issue for a number of years and were especially sharp between 1980–86.
starvation. In addition, they suggest, secondary forms also exist, more designed for urban universities, professional schools, junior colleges and community colleges that are predominately Black.  Adams and Hill suggest:

The unitary structure form places Black supported institutions under central governing boards. Examples of this form are Maryland State College and Maryland Eastern Shore, Arkansas A&M College...now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff...The cross index enrollment form seeks to make a Black college in the same city with a major white university dependent on the white institution. The financial starvation form is primarily characteristic of what is being done to Black private colleges. Black private schools receive very little, if any, state aid and they lack large endowments, therefore they rely very heavily on tuition fees.  

With respect to the Black private institutions, the former director of the Southern regional office of the United Negro College Fund, Larry Alston, argues that given the current trends in government funding the future of Black higher education depends upon "new dynamics." He said, referring to the proposed cut in education funding,

If the projected Reagan administration cuts are enacted...an estimated 10,000 students currently enrolled at UNCF schools would have to drop out. An additional 40,000 students would have to drop out of the nation's other Black colleges and universities. Many Black schools will have to change their academic scope in order to attract qualified students. There may be a de-emphasizing of liberal arts, in some instances and a move toward greater specialization. Some institutions may take on the functions of part-time older


33Ibid.
students. More evening class may emerge. Others may have to share facilities and consolidate departments with other schools. Several of the public colleges may become increasingly integrated, and in some cases predominately white. Still others may look to form new linkages and relationships with local corporations where they will institute courses of study directly related to local corporate needs.  

Mary Berry, member of the United States Civil Rights Commission, suggests that federal policy towards the historically Black colleges and universities will have an impact but perhaps more on the students than on the institutions directly. She maintains:

...the evolution of federal policy, in a number of areas, currently confronting Black colleges will be major issues in their continuing quest for self-determination. One issue is how Black institutions will adjust to the shifts in federal policy toward the financing of higher education...A second issue is how Black colleges will respond to shifts in the implementation of national desegregation policy. Some of these institutions may fear merger or closing, but most lost the leverage they once had through the threat of federal civil right enforcement if the states do not enhance their institutions.

Berry also argues that what will likely occur in the near future may be quite interesting. She maintains that the role of external forces could be a major force of progress, because the existence of the Black institutions as separate institutions devoted to the education of Black

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students, can receive rhetorical and some financial support from policy makers who are philosophically and politically opposed to desegregation on a variety of fronts. Berry further states:

The institutions, therefore, will not be threatened and may gain institutional aid such as a building here and there while budget cutting takes place in other programs. Therefore they will survive better in the current atmosphere of withdrawal of federal support from human resource programs so important to the Black population at large than other similar institutions of importance to the Black community. Their student populations will find it increasingly difficult to find the funds to pay the cost of education. Their graduates will find it difficult to achieve or keep the employment they have when the programs in which many of them work are being cut and with weakening enforcement of affirmative action in the public and private sector. These external forces will affect Black educational institutions quest for self-determination.  

Berry is rather perceptive on all accounts. In fact, the real unemployment rate for many Black college graduating classes ranges as high as forty percent (40%). It is also true that social programs have borne the brunt of the government cutbacks. In addition, the problem of locating funds to pay for the increasing cost of education, coupled with the policy change from grants to loans has resulted in a large sector of the student population graduating owing in excess of between $40,000 - $50,000.  

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36Ibid., 42.  
38Ibid.
Floyd Hayes, in his work on the "Political Economy of Black Higher Education in a Technocratic Era," has stated that an often overlooked factor relating to the destruction of historically Black colleges and universities and educational opportunities for African American students, is how the ideological dominance of the American ruling class is maintain by the educational system. He argues:

Many liberal social scientists and educational policy makers zealously point out the need for the elimination or reduction of tracking and the introduction of "culturally unbiased" selection procedures and the implementation of mainstreaming. However, what these arguments overlook is that it is not schooling itself, but the system of economic production that creates and maintains social inequalities...African Americans have always been hopeful that education would be particularly instrumental in their struggle to achieve independence and self-determination. Yet education in America has traditionally functioned as an agency of social control.  

Hayes' point that it was not schooling, but the system of economic production that creates and maintains social inequalities also suggests that racism, sexism and class privileges are in fact reproduced and justified by the educational system. Hence, the educational system as it relates to African Americans should be viewed as part of the state structure, which has the main aim of protecting and reproducing the social order which operates to their disadvantage.

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Several other scholars and social activists have also indicated the important yet contradictory role the historically Black colleges and universities have played and continue to occupy. Several scholars have even asserted that the very reason for the creation of the Black colleges was to train Black "leaders" who could mediate conflicts between African Americans and the dominant society.\(^{40}\)

Manning Marable suggests that perhaps one of the reasons the historically Black colleges and universities are collapsing without wide community support is their inability to develop a clear pedagogy of liberation and to be organically connected to the Black struggle for self-determination.\(^{41}\)

Finally, Mack Jones argues that Black colleges are today faced with new responsibilities to their communities:

It is now their task to create a new political consciousness among Blacks that will lead to a commonly shared ideological network or worldview which, in turn, will facilitate an understanding of the Black predicament in an international context. Such an ideology would disabuse its holders of the many counter-revolutionary values which now impede the Black struggle, define their friends and enemies, and order the priorities of the Black diaspora in America. This task requires a radical restructuring of the Black colleges as we know them.\(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\)Ibid.

\(^{41}\)Marable, "Quiet Death," 39.

\(^{42}\)Mack Jones, "The Responsibility of the Black College to the Black Community: Then and Now", Daedalus 100, no. 3 (1971): 733-734.
By all accounts the future place and role of the historically Black college and universities is connected to the continuing demise of education opportunities for African Americans generally and the changing social order.

In Chapter Two, we pointed out the declining opportunities for African Americans to obtain higher education and examined the debate surrounding the continued existence of the historically Black colleges and universities in that context. We now turn our focus to the societal crisis which has given rise to that particular context, and which in turn also conditions the policy options instituted by the dominant culture. In addition, we consider the intersection between the crisis and the race-class dialectic in higher education.
Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In evaluating educational policy perhaps the best place to start is not with details of the current situation, but with what has given rise to the set of policies that have shaped the current situation, and how that said policy has impacted the entire education system. This approach seems better suited for the gaining of a clearer understanding of the relationship between society and the educational system. As Hayes has suggested, it is the economic arrangements in society and its various components, especially its productive sector, which play a determining role in shaping the system of education and reproducing the inherent inequalities found in society. In fact, in the United States the education system is central to the maintenance of a racist, sexist and a class-oriented society. Take, for example, the problem of unemployment which renders the

\[1\] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2.

\[2\] This does not mean that the socio-political realities do not influence the manner in which the inequalities are projected. It is the interplay between the economic substructure and the superstructure that often obscures the central role of the economic order.
education of millions of young people irrelevant to the needs of society and therefore makes them socially expendable. Generally, it can be concluded that the type and level of skills and professions required by society is directly connected to the level of development, which in turn influences the degree of literacy as well as the types of specialization promoted within the educational sector. If this be true, then the denial of access to skills produces individuals who effectively have no place or role in society. In other words, the end result is, as Rev. Jesse Jackson has often lamented, "Some are being programmed for Yale while others are being programmed for jail."

However, it should be noted that the social and political realities set the context for the particular manner within which that determining role is exercised.

A second major factor to consider, which plays an important role in shaping the system of education, is the nature of the power structure in the society and the educational policies implemented through that structure. What the above two points mean for the United States, the leading northern capitalist country, where inequalities are inherent in the system is the following: in order to correctly discuss the crisis of education, the starting

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point must be from the perspective of a changing productive process and economic substructure.

It is no secret that a crisis exists in the United States today and that crisis is affecting the social, political, economic and cultural sectors of the society. A brief, but critical look at the crisis and how it is impacting on education generally, and on the educational opportunities of African Americans specifically, is the aim of this chapter. The exact nature of the crisis and where its root causes are located is perhaps the most important question to be answered if indeed the problem is to be solved.

One could say that the root causes can be found in the capitalist system of organization and production itself. However, for our purposes, the present crisis has to be outlined in more analytical terms.

During the 1970s and the early 1980s a prolonged period of stagnated growth occurred in the United States economy. The periodic crisis of over-production associated with the business cycles, endemic to capitalist economies, have been deepening and occurring on a more regular basis. For example, within a five-year period the United States economy suffered from two such crisis; 1973-75 and 1979-82. In both cases, the decline in industrial production was the heaviest

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since the Great Depression. During that period, United States productivity and living standards operated at an increasingly declining level compared to countries in Western Europe and the Pacific Basin. These countries' ability to produce at lower cost and at a higher quality was significantly increased by newer factories, better production techniques and cheaper labor costs. During the two recessions in the United States, the general economic sluggishness did not disappear, even in the pauses between the crisis. For African Americans, who never really recovered from the first recession, the overall effects were devastating. In 1982, for instance, one-third of all unemployed people in the United States were African Americans, Double-digit unemployment figures became the norm. Another important factor to consider was the drop in the rate of labor productivity, that was closely tied to the overall drop in the rate of growth in production. The result of this was the interlinking of the cyclical disorder with the more protracted structural crisis.

The structural crisis hit hardest in the auto, steel, construction, manufacturing and other traditional sectors

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5Ibid.
6Ibid.
employing the bulk of semi-skilled and skilled labor.\textsuperscript{8} These were the very sectors where African American workers were more concentrated. The industrial decline was exacerbated by "stagflation" -- simultaneous high inflation and high unemployment. This occurrence cannot even be explained by conventional economic theory. Yet, several federal policies were implemented in an attempt to lower inflation and encourage more investment by business. However, the prescribed "recipes" for correcting the situation were largely ignored by the multinational corporations. Instead, massive layoffs, factory relocations or plant closures occurred. It was at this point that a new political climate, related to the economic decline in the country, brought in the openly right-wing Reagan/Bush administrations and their supply-side "Reaganomics." Their economic logic read as follows:

\textit{Lower t...leads to increased I...E...Y...C...I'}

It was believed that a cut in taxes (t) for corporations would encourage them to invest (I) and that, in turn, would expand business operations thereby leading to more employment (E). As more and more people were to be employed, the theory says, this would mean a larger income (Y) and therefore more consumption (C). The larger amount of consumption invariably would produce the incentive for business to invest (I') more and the economy would continue

\textsuperscript{8}Bluestone, \textit{Deindustrialization and Unemployment}, 30.
to expand. The above seems rather logical, however the fact is capitalism does not follow logic, but rather the profit margin. Since taxes were to "trigger" the supply side equation, they were cut for business and the wealthy and in many instances totally eliminated. In fact, fifty of the largest corporations in the United States paid less than one cent collectively over a five-year period (1981-1986). Overall, the corporate share of taxes relative to the individual share in tax payments shifted dramatically during the 1980s. Moreover, the multinationals continued in the direction of not reinvesting, not upgrading their infrastructure or retraining workers.

At the same time taxes were being cut for the rich, spending was being increased to record levels for unproductive military hardware.

Obviously, the crisis had a negative impact on educational funding. The priorities of the government meant that the amount of funds allocated for public expenditures on social programs decreased significantly. For most poor and working class families a general inability to support

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their children's education arose.\textsuperscript{11} Educational funding remained at less than 2% of the total federal tax dollar as the figure below depicts:

\textsuperscript{11}See increased cost of public and private college in Appendix E.
Education Funding as a Percentage of Federal Tax Dollars

Fig. 3.1

Source: Jobs With Peace
Politically, the existence of a right-wing administration exhibiting anti-labor, anti-civil rights, and objectively pro-racist views in its regressive social policies, had a tremendously negative impact on the social environment which conditions policy formulation.

All of the above is important to note because, as was discussed earlier, a government's policy toward education is naturally based on the degree of the commitment toward the majority of the population. Hence, the responsibility to provide the majority with the basic and necessary education to be productive citizens is reflected in government funding priorities. In addition, the field of education itself may be a platform for power struggles and an intellectual and philosophical contest, but in the final analysis those who wield power have greater influence on the content of education and its direction. Therefore, the financing of education plays an important role in the functioning of the education institutions. Thus, one can infer that the level of expenditure not only reveals the commitment of the government toward the cause of education, but also the orientation of the power structure. A more specific review of the Reagan/Bush administration follows.

The decade of the 1980's opened with a new President who had articulated as one of his campaign promises, the destruction of the United States Department of Education, which had been created under the Carter administration.
However, public and congressional opposition to such an ideal was diverse and substantial. The idea of destroying the department was therefore dropped. However, during the first administration, the adopted philosophy and policy changes all but destroyed previously held views and practices on the role of the federal government in educating the citizens of the United States.

The American Council on Education had the following to say about the changing government policy,

The Federal government's shift from awarding scholarships and grants to providing loans has reduced the level of assistance to Black students and increased amounts to white and Hispanics. The largest groups, who have been most dependent on grants have been most hard hit by this shift. The changes have favored middle-income students. With the lowest income of all three groups, Blacks have been affected the most. Given these factors, it is not surprising that the number of Blacks enrolling at college is rapidly decreasing.¹²

In the past, the federal government was almost always seen as a friend to the education community. This view had been developed largely by the positive role the government had played during the 1960s and 1970s in expanding access and equality of opportunity to larger sections of the United States population.

Since 1981, the federal government's philosophy on education has been one where the major responsibility of providing education has been progressively shifted to the

parents and the student, and, as cited above away from grants to loans. The mechanisms through which this has come about have been varied, ranging from the establishment of arbitrarily defined "self-help" dollar amounts expected from each student to an almost complete overhaul of the entire student financial assistance programs. Proposals abound with respect to restructuring many programs thought to be "safe," to the elimination of proven programs such as the College Work Study Program. In addition, the introduction and continued adherence to the Gramm—Rudman Balanced Budget Act, could mean that all assistance programs would be eliminated automatically if the executive and legislative branches of government cannot agree on a budget that meets the set reduction levels aimed at eliminating the more than 250 billion dollar deficit accumulated under the Reagan/Bush administrations.\textsuperscript{13} The attempt to meet the budget regulations required drastic cuts in social programs, and given that military spending increased excessively, only modest cuts occurred in real terms. Against this background, almost all sectors of society agreed that a crisis in education existed. However, the perspectives on the nature of the crisis differed radically.

Our nation is at risk...The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and as a

people...Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them...If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.14

The above quote was representative of the "call to alarm" by several nationally established commissions on excellence, while only lip service was given to equality and access. In fact, a surprisingly open criticism of access was made by one of the several national commissions which represented the views of growing sections of the educational community. The report stated in part,

As laudable as it may be an ideal, the widening of access also has contributed to the confusion that has beset the baccalaureate experience. The tension between democratic values and the effort to maintain standards for undergraduate education can be creative but too often numbers and political considerations have prevailed over quality.15

Additionally, one has to note that the Carnegie Commission report, "A Nation At Risk," mentioned the need to aspire to achieve equity in higher education, but did not devote one page of this important report to suggesting how that might be done or even why it was important to be done.


It did not say anything fundamentally new with regards to the relationship between excellence in higher education and access or equity.16 This was typical of the national mood.

For the historically Black colleges and universities and African American college students and educators, the times certainly were critical. In his 1986 State of the Union address, President Reagan spoke of a "renaissance" in education being underway. However, within a twenty-four-hour period he, as the Congressional Black Caucus reported, submitted to Congress a budget which sought cuts in education totalling more than 25 percent of the allocated funding for education in the previous year's federal budget.17 When asked his opinion about the proposed cuts, then Secretary of Education, William Bennett, said: "we can live with the cuts" and further suggested that even if a few colleges closed it would not make that big a difference as there were more than 3,000 institutions of higher learning in the United States.

It is ironic that at the same time the administration insisted that deep cuts in federal social programs were necessary and even categorized ketchup as a vegetable (in order to meet nutritional guidelines and budget


constraints), the administration, lead by the President, also continued to advocate for massive new expenditures to private schools (many exclusively all-white) through his proposal to create tuition tax credits. However, one should not be surprised that such policy proposals were made. They were consistent with the administration's support for other private institutions that openly promoted and practiced discrimination, as its opposition to the Civil Rights Restoration Act, affirmative action, and other social programs designed to help the poor all attest to.

What was the impact of these policies and views on African American higher education opportunities given the societal crisis and context described above? The remainder of this chapter shall outline several aspects of the situation of Black higher education as dictated by the changes in policy and the government's orientation.

The situation of African American college students has obviously worsened as the changes in financial assistance programs have meant an absolute decline in the proportion of students pursuing higher education, despite the fact that larger numbers of African American high school graduates are available to attend colleges and universities and are scoring higher on the SATs as the figure below shows.
Black Increase in SAT Scores

1976-1989

Fig. 3.2

Source: Department of Education
TABLE 3.1

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST SCORES
BY RACE/ETHNIC GROUP, 1976-1989

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer. Indian</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Amer.</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>+8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican Amer.</td>
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<td>370</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer. Indian</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Amer.</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Amer.</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Education

In fact, as the table above shows, African Americans have shown the greatest increase of all groups in test scores. One should also note here the well documented cultural bias of such tests, which have historically been used to deny access, even though it is now clear that such examinations are really not good indicators of how
successful or unsuccessful one might be as one enrolls in institutions of higher learning. Ironically at the same time that more students from minority groups are graduating and attaining higher SAT scores, the opposite is occurring with respect to enrollment. In other words, fewer and fewer African Americans are enrolling even though more and more of them are better prepared according to their test scores.\(^{18}\)

With respect to the historically Black colleges and universities, the assault has been devastating. Several schools have closed and many others are on the brink of financial collapse. In 1986, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools placed three colleges on probation assigning them to almost certain death.\(^ {19}\) Moreover, maintaining accreditation remains a problem for still others.

The location and situation of African American students is quite important to understand here. Over fifty percent (50\%) of all Black college students go to school in the Southern and border states (Virginia, Maryland and Kentucky). Approximately one-third of those students can be

\(^{18}\)The trend of increasing high school completion rates leveled off in the second half of the mid 1980s. In fact, according to the Children's Defense Fund, the overall percentage of high school graduates decreased from 82.4 percent to 81.2 percent between 1986 and 1988.

found at the historically Black colleges and universities. (See Appendix E). The remaining students are in predominately Black institutions or those colleges which have, because of changing enrollment patterns, become majority Black. Outside the Southern states, one-fifth of all Black college students attend institutions where more than half the students are African Americans. Most of these are two-year vocational institutions. Among all African American college students, 16% attend the historically Black colleges and universities. Most of these institutions are very heavily dependent upon federal and/or state assistance for their continued existence.

The Black student enrollment patterns breakdown further in the following manner: of the total enrollment, 14.9% are in universities; 43% are in four-year colleges and 42.7% are in two-year colleges. Overall, 69% attend public institutions and 27% attend private institutions.21

21Ibid.
Black Student Enrollment by Type

All Black College Students

- 83.3% Non-HBCUs
- 6.7% HBCUs

Black College Students at 4-year Institutions

- 72.6% Non-HBCUs
- 27.4% HBCUs

Source: Center for Educational Statistics, and the American Council on Education
In addition, we should note, as Alston and others have documented, nearly 96% of all African American college students receive some form of financial aid with the lion's share coming from the federal government. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the decline in enrollment figures became popularly known. Black enrollment in colleges and universities has declined from 41% in the late 1970s to less than 26% of the graduating high school classes today.\textsuperscript{22} The reality is clear, access to higher education opportunities for African Americans is increasingly being eliminated, even though more students are in fact eligible to attend college. When one adds to this the dramatic increases in tuition and fees associated with attending college today, the sense of a real crisis ought to be very apparent. The cost of a year at the average private college rose from more than $9,000 to almost $15,000, while the cost of a year in a public institution increased from $3,500 to over $6,000 for in-state students and close to $9,000 for out-of-state students on the average.\textsuperscript{23}

It would seem that a national policy in education which recognizes such barriers to access and other realities ought to be diverse and flexible enough to serve the needs of different regions and groups of people. Instead, the

\textsuperscript{22}Jennings, \textit{Race & Excellence}, 9.

Reagan/Bush administrations through the United States Department of Education, adopted the most conservative view of any recent administration and even promoted views such as English becoming the "official" language of the United States, thereby justifying further cuts in programs such as bilingual education, and escalating the education crisis.

Demographic trends sometimes are utilized as a measure in the setting of national policies. The current population trends indicate that despite the overall decline in the general youth population, the proportions of African American and Latino youth in the college age cohort will continue to grow. Moreover, by the year 2000 the United States population is projected to be at least one-third people of color comprised of approximately 40 million African Americans, 40 million Latinos, and more than 10 million Asians. According to the American Council of Education:

...the significant increase in the growth of its minority population...will be of enormous consequence to the political economic and social future of the nation...Although there is growing recognition of the importance there is also apprehension in that this society's major institutions are not responding quickly or adequately enough in developing policies that will maximize the contributions to be made by the escalating numbers of minorities in the population.\(^{25}\)


\(^{25}\)Ibid.
In addition to the changes cited above, it should also be noted that the population distribution of the United States is changing as well, from the "frost belt" to the "sun belt." The sweep of change is broad enough to have implications for all of American society. As the American Council on Education concluded, such demographic changes will also affect American lifestyles, the workplace and the linkage between education and work, therefore, it seems only logical that a well thought out response would be forthcoming from the government.

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of the Reagan/Bush administrations' philosophical and political priorities in education (which were promoted by administration spokesmen as not being harmful to the "truly needy") was the recommendation for a 55% reduction of federal support to a group of programs that were designed specifically to help students classified as being "disadvantaged." At the same time, the administration also made it difficult for even middle-income families to borrow low interest loans for college. The administration proposed cutting the entire program from $182 million to $82 million in FY 1987. The $100 million to be saved just happened to be equal to the amount approved that same year to be transferred to the counter-revolutionary Contra bandits operating to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.
One can conclude that the progress made in education during the 1960s and early 1970s was rapidly eroded in the 1980s by decreased federal funding, increasing educational costs and a right-wing educational philosophy, which at its core was anti-democratic and elitist. Moreover, the consequences are clear -- less educational opportunities for African American students, objectively a decline in support for the historically Black colleges and universities, and an abstract discussion about "excellence" at the expense of equal access and equality of opportunity. Collectively, this may well represent the re-segregation of higher education in the United States, along race and class lines.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{26}Several researchers have begun to refer to this reality as a two-tier educational system.
Robert Albright has stated that

the nation's historically Black colleges have always lived and operated on the margin historically, they have never received the resources or the support they have needed to carry out one of the most demanding and difficult assignments in the history of higher education—namely to educate and provide advocacy for a race of people largely ignored by the society in general.

Such was and is the position the historically Black colleges and universities continue to occupy. In chapters two and three we showed that the higher education opportunities for African American youth were being limited at every level. Moreover, we also pointed out that current trends suggest that federal support for various aspects of higher education will probably continue to decline precipitously, and as a consequence of the national emphasis on "educational excellence", there has been a subtle shift away from support for students who come to college in need of academic support programs.

Indeed, this set of circumstances would suggest, as the President of Johnson C. Smith College did recently at a conference entitled "Challenges for Traditionally Black Colleges: A New Look," that now is an appropriate time for

1Albright, The Clarion Call, 3.
historically Black colleges and universities to take stock of themselves in an effort to determine how best to meet the challenges which confront them today.²

The foregoing suggests that a more detailed overview of the historical mission of the historically Black colleges and universities be presented. In this chapter, therefore, we present a brief review of the views of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and what a few other noted analysts have had to say with respect to the purpose, role, mission and responsibilities of these institutions. Such historical and contemporary perspectives will provide an additional set of data from which the Fisk University predicament can be viewed more critically.

In 1933, while delivering a commencement speech at Fisk University, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois put forth the view that the Black college should be founded on a knowledge of the history of the people they were created to serve, i.e., African Americans. He reasoned that there could be no college for African Americans which was not grounded in the culture of the race. He said:

> There can be no college for Negroes which is not a Negro college, and that while an American Negro university, just like a German or a Swiss University may rightly aspire to an universal culture unhampered by limitations of race and

²Ibid.
culture, yet it must start on the earth where we sit and not in the skies whither we aspire.\textsuperscript{3}

DuBois further argued that as a college roots itself in the group life and afterward applies its knowledge and culture to actual living, it (in this case the Black college) would in fact be in a position to raise the cultural level of the entire society.\textsuperscript{4} Specifically, he believed that the Black college could also play a liberating role with respect to white racist America as well.\textsuperscript{5}

DuBois' views were constantly maturing. His brilliant career was one in which he delivered hundreds of speeches and wrote many articles and books on Black education. One of the more important articles he wrote was in reference to Atlanta University, the academic institution at which he was employed the longest. In his article, "The Cultural Mission of Atlanta University", Dr. DuBois continued to develop his theme on the role that the Black college must play in the liberating process of African Americans. He argued that there were four basic missions this particular set of institutions was called upon to meet, they were: 1) establishing the principle that higher education should be available to Blacks; 2) defending the principle of racial


\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 95-96.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 99.
equality by combatting national and international doctrines to the contrary; 3) establishing freedom of Black colleges concerning what they would teach and to whom it would be taught; and 4) promoting democracy and social power for Black people by working for enfranchisement and gradual acquisition of political power.⁶

DuBois believed that the objective aim of the university ultimately was to change the culture of its day and thereby gradually raise the existing level of civilization. Therefore, in a racist society built on a foundation of class privilege, in the pursuit of higher education, the fight for social equality and academic freedom were of paramount importance.⁷

In his lecture, "Whither Now and Why," DuBois, in a very candid manner, challenged teachers to "teach the truth" even if it meant being fired. He argued that the condition of Black people in United States society meant that they had to take the lead in making democracy real in America. He questioned the purposes of education as perceived and taught in capitalist society, and suggested that a consistent struggle against what he termed "the new American slavery of thought" was needed. He concluded by saying that African Americans had to ask themselves several fundamental


⁷Ibid.
questions, as the struggle was changing and should now center around the possibility of African Americans and their cultural patterns existing in the United States without discrimination.\textsuperscript{8} DuBois said:

What we now must ask ourselves is when we become equal American citizens, what will be our aims and ideals, and what will we have to do with selecting these aims and ideals?\textsuperscript{9}

Such questions and a line of thought as suggested by DuBois above, meant that the answers would, as he points out, "bring up a number of different problems of race and culture which we will have to solve." DuBois' views were not shared by everyone involved in higher education in general or Black education specifically. The debate with Booker T. Washington is perhaps the most famous of DuBois' disagreements over the purposes and mission of the Black colleges and African American education generally. And while this is not the place to rehash that debate it is important to place it in a historical context so that one can judge the current reality not against those positions, but against the predicament of African American people today.

C. Eric Lincoln has argued that the fierce debate between Washington and DuBois was historically necessary for the establishment of an educational perspective for Black

\textsuperscript{8}DuBois, Whither Now and Why, 150.

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 149.
leadership, and that given the fact that Blacks had so recently emerged from slavery the question of what kind of educational system would prove most functional in the short and long run was conjunctural and problematic. DuBois' view, in part, echoes this point. He argued:

We must carefully understand the age in which we live...there can be no question—no hesitation; unless we develop our full capabilities, we cannot survive. If we are to be trained grudgingly and suspiciously; trained not with reference to what we can be, but with sole reference to what somebody wants us to be; if instead of following the methods pointed by the accumulated wisdom of the world for the development of full human power, we simply are trying to follow the line of least resistance and teach Black men only such things and by such methods that are momentarily popular.

DuBois lashed out time and time again against "the Hampton Idea" or Tuskegee model as he argued that such an approach really placed the struggle for rights and equality in a secondary role to duties. He said for the African American students the Hampton approach,

puts their rights in the background; emphasizes their duties—says little of ambition of aspiration; and above all, watch and ward against the first appearance of arrogance or self assertion or consciousness of great power. Take the eyes of these million off the stars and fasten them in the soil; and if their young men will

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dream dreams, let them be dreams of corn bread and molasses.\textsuperscript{12}

Marable has attempted to put in critical perspective the Hampton/Tuskegee approach by Washington. He suggests that one of the consequences of the approach was authoritarian administrative leadership styles. He says,

The founder of the Tuskegee Institute in 1881 at the age of 25, Washington built his college in an era of extreme racist violence and overt political repression. Between 1882 and 1927, 304 Black men and some women were lynched or burned at the stake in the state of Alabama alone. After 1901 Black voters in Alabama were effectively disenfranchised for the next 60 years. Washington himself was the object of racist abuse and threats by extremist bigots, despite his accommodationist rhetoric and his emphasis on industrial and agricultural training. Given the omnipresence of racist violence, one small mistake by a member of the Tuskegee community could have destroyed the college.

Thus, Washington created an administrative system at Tuskegee which rigorously regulated all aspects of student and faculty life. Students were taught discipline, an uncritical respect for established order and an outward conservatism in social relations towards Whites. Faculty could not protest against Jim Crow restrictions, and NAACP "radicals" like DuBois were viewed with undisguised contempt. Washington frequently spoke out against trade unionism, socialism and any political movement which jeopardized the interests of his 'Christ-like' philanthropists. To survive the long social nightmare of American apartheid, the Tuskegee model for Black education discouraged intellectual innovation, radical cultural creativity, and any manifestation of social and political ferment which questioned White supremacy. But the result of accommodation was survival.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13}Marable, \textit{Quiet Death}, 35.
Mack Jones in his article, "The Responsibility of the Black College to the Black Community: Then and Now," has argued that many elements in the White community had objectives for the Black colleges that were "studiously structured to omit courses and activities which dealt realistically with the Black predicament in America." He says:

The accommodationist philosophy of persons such as Booker T. Washington was warmly supported by the White community, while that of his rivals was condemned. Every effort was made to insure that Black students acquired a political attitude which would lead them to accept their subordinate position in society.\textsuperscript{14}

Jones further suggests that the missions implied by DuBois ran diametrically counter to the preferences of those sharing the "dirty worker" perspective, but that in spite of this the Black colleges have largely met their original mission. While arguing that the earlier historical mission has been rendered obsolete, he says:

To say that Black colleges have met the responsibilities entrusted to them at their inception is not to exonerate their contemporary successes from criticism, because the conditions under which African Americans live have changed, the responsibilities of the colleges have changed commensurately, and Black colleges have not moved to meet these new responsibilities...To begin, propositions that Blacks are educable and that higher education should be made available to them has been firmly established and doctrines of racial inferiority have been debunked (in spite of efforts to resurrect them). Impediments to the

franchise and formal political participation of these objectives has not led to substantive changes in the lives of Black people, but rather it has demonstrated that their oppression is not an aberration in the system but an essential condition of the system itself, and that therefore accession to Black demands for equal status requires radical restructuring of America's socioeconomic and political systems -- a restructuring which makes demands both materially and psychologically on every American subject and which has profound implications for the role of the United States as the enforcer of European hegemony over colored peoples of the world...These realities constitute the new conditions under which the Black community has to structure the nature and content of the contemporary responsibilities of Black colleges to their communities.  

Jones makes the foregoing insightful points regarding the present situation in which the Black colleges find themselves, and argues that the major responsibility of the Black colleges to the community now, is to create a universally accepted perception of the black predicament, and to provide a serious catalyst for earnest discussion of the goals of black people, both long and short term, and the most expeditious means for their realization. If those conditions are to be met several things must happen. In order for a more responsive university to be created, Jones suggests there must first be a fundamental restructuring of the curriculum:

Social science, humanities and the arts, and education curricula must be recast so that the beginning of all analysis is Africa and the problem of Black people living in America...For example, the history of African people would

15Ibid.

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replace the course in Western civilization as the lodestar for historical analysis; [the] political science courses would be concerned with acquiring and manipulating power to produce radical change rather than with maintaining a stable commonwealth; similarly sciences and technical subjects would be taught in a political context growing out of the problems of Black people; extra curricular activities would be grounded in the experience of African people with the struggle against Euro-American exploitation being the focal point.\textsuperscript{16}

Floyd Hayes, also in the DuBoisian tradition, makes several points similar to those suggested by Jones. Hayes argues that there are six critical challenges now confronting the historically Black colleges and African American education. Like DuBois, Hayes believes that the historically Black colleges must root themselves in the African experience and be directed toward the survival and development of African people.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, he further argues that African American education must serve as a liberating force in America and the world, and in order to achieve this African American students must be prepared to understand the world. Therefore, the following critical areas must be approached:

1) Black institutions must establish linkages with other universities in the Pan-African world; 2) African American education must overcome the fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge by increasingly exploring the possibility of cross-disciplinary studies; 3) African American education will have to engage in the serious and systematic examination of

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17}Hayes, \textit{Structures of Dominance}, 16-17.

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Europeans — their philosophical orientation, politics, economics, culture, values and social relations. An Afro-centric world view should be adopted to guide this project of examination; 4) historically Black institutions and African American education strongly emphasize research and instruction in science and technology, as well as the social function of science and technology; 5) Black institutions must become increasingly future-oriented. Futuristic orientation that will result in the preparation for political, economic and cultural change. African Americans must be educated in such a fashion so that neither they nor their education become obsolete, and 6) the Black university and African American education must intersect with the masses of African American people. There must be increased interaction between Black institutions and the Black communities in which they are located. In the final analysis, African Americans must develop and begin to live a culture of struggle.18

The foregoing views of Jones and Hayes are essential to our understanding of what was happening at Fisk University in 1977. Moreover, their views are in concert with those of DuBois, especially when he stated: "What is a culture? But careful knowledge of the past, out of which the group as such has emerged." In the case of African Americans, DuBois argues that the Black university must have as its main concern the African American predicament in the USA.

The mission of the historically Black college and university in a changing environment remains a subject of great debate. However, the views of DuBois best articulate the historically determined cultural mission of the Black colleges and universities, while those of Jones and Hayes outline the continuing challenges that must be met.

18Ibid.
We shall now turn to our analysis of one historically Black college and see the extent to which it was allowed to fulfill [or betray] the cultural mission as suggested by Dr. DuBois.
CHAPTER FIVE
FISK UNIVERSITY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Fisk University has long been recognized as one of the leading educational institutions in the United States and considered for many years to be the flagship of the Black colleges.

Fisk was founded at the close of the Civil War by formerly enslaved Africans born in America, with the assistance of the American Missionary Association and the Western Freedman's Aid Commission.¹ This was an effort to quench the thirst for education by Blacks whom Southern slave laws had prevented from receiving any type of education other than that of how to be a "good slave." The University was named for a Union general, Carlton B. Fisk, whose forces won the battle of Fort Nash.² This was a decisive battle in the march southward by the Union soldiers that included a sizeable contingent of African Americans known as the United States Colored Troops.

Fisk's name first spread across the country by way of the famed Jubilee Singers, a group of talented students, not initially supported by school administrators, who travelled across the country and in parts of Europe between 1871 and


The students sang "Negro spirituals" for Queens and Emperors to raise funds to help sustain the financially struggling institution and to construct new buildings. Much of the money raised went toward the construction of Jubilee Hall, which was erected on the North Nashville campus and remains one of the oldest buildings in the United States built specifically for the education of Black people. The African cultural heritage of the campus' architecture is shown by the layout which forms the shape of an Ethiopian Christian cross. The institution subsequently grew and developed for over 100 years, gaining an international reputation as a great liberal arts college.

As early as 1930 (or as late as 1930, due to racism), Fisk became the first historically Black college to gain full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the major accrediting agency in the South. Fisk was also the first such institution to be placed on the approved lists of the Association of American Universities (1933), and the American Association of University Women (1948). In the fall of 1952, Fisk was granted a charter for the establishment of a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. According to the university's bulletin of 1984

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3Ibid.  
4Ibid.  
5Ibid.  
6Ibid.
Fisk had enrolled students from almost every state in the nation and many foreign countries. Over 50% of its recent graduates had gone on to pursue further study immediately after studying at Fisk — 10% to medical schools; 5% to dental schools; 10% to law schools; and 5% to business schools. It is further pointed out that a greater percentage of Fisk graduates hold doctoral degrees than graduates of any other historically Black college.7

In short, the extent of the role Fisk has occupied in African American higher education cannot be overstated. Manning Marable, a leading Black social critic and former director of the Fisk Race Relations Institute, has argued that despite institutional barriers to quality education such as segregation and lack of federal support, Black schools generally did a remarkable job in preparing Black youth for productive careers in the natural and social sciences, the trades and humanities.

Marable says of Fisk for example,

Fisk was the home for a major number of Black intellectuals during the era of segregation: DuBois; historian John Hope Franklin; sociologist E. Franklin Frazier; artist/novelists James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Sterling Brown, John Oliver Killens, and Frank Yerby. A number of other alumni joined the ranks of the Black elite in the twentieth century as decisive leaders in public policy, representing a variety of political tendencies: U.S. Representative William L. Dawson; Marion Barry, Mayor of Washington, DC; Wade H. McCree, U.S. Solicitor General during the Carter Administration; U.S. District Judge Constance

7Ibid.
Baker Motley; Civil Rights activists John Lewis; Texas State Representative Wilhemona Delco; Federal Judge James Kimbrough. Other Fisk graduates moved into the private sector to establish an economic program for Black economic development along capitalist lines, such as A. Maceo Walker, President of Universal Life Insurance Company. And within the professions one out of every six Black physicians, lawyers and dentists in the United States today are Fisk graduates.8

The above is only part of a much larger and more impressive historical legacy to which personalities such as W.C. Handy, Aaron Douglass, Ida B. Wells, George Padmore, Mary Berry and Nikki Giovanni could be added.

One important aspect of the Fisk tradition that should be mentioned prominently is the institution being a refuge for many of the radical voices of the Harlem Renaissance and a liberal voice for the right of academic freedom during the "Cold War" days as well as a home for many students who stood up for civil rights and social change during the early 1960s and 1970s. The reason for Fisk being a venue for progressive elements of society can be grasped partly through the institution's once highly regarded mission statement, which included as one of its main aims besides educating Black leadership from the diaspora,

To develop a graduate possessing respect for individual freedom and the democratic process who is capable of contributing to constructive community consolidation, facilitating the liberation of Black people so that they become

"free" in the strictest sense, socially, economically and politically. 9

Many critics have argued that Black colleges such as Fisk have never been organically linked to the day-to-day struggles of African Americans and have also failed to develop a liberation pedagogy. 10 Although to an extent this is true, it must be stated that this was more method than observed policy. Further, there are and have been exceptional moments, and historically Fisk has had more than its share. Fisk for instance, was the site of one of the earliest student revolts during the 1920s calling for the removal of "Jim Crow" segregation practices on the campus and the hiring of Black administrators (these were the "New Negroes" on campus). 11 The students were able to point out that the alliance between the reactionary southern barons and the northern philanthropic sources was detrimental to the survival of Fisk. 12 The institution was also the site in the early 1950s where many of the strategy sessions were

9 Fisk University Bulletin, 7
10 Marable, "Quiet Death," 39.
held to develop plans for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used the Fisk campus as the place to elaborate his plans for the "second phase" of the civil rights movement in 1958 and undoubtedly had an impact on the student body, which later provided much of the initial leadership for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.\(^{13}\) Nashville became the center for the "freedom rides" and would also be the place where "Black Power" as a concept was first internalized and demanded through the development of a curriculum and Black studies program for a Black college campus.\(^{14}\)

The essence of the point to be grasped from the foregoing is that as an African American social institution, Fisk University has played a key role in the Black struggle for freedom and equality in the United States. Moreover, Fisk has equally occupied a central role in the history of Black higher education and its relationship to the development of the Black community. However, it was not this magnificent historical role that would place Fisk in the newspaper headlines during the decade of the 1980s.


CHAPTER SIX
THE DESTRUCTION OF A BLACK INSTITUTION

In late March 1983, a four-page tabloid which had been secretly distributed, appeared on the Fisk University campus containing a number of articles dating back as far as 1977. The editorial stated the following:

A crisis exists at Fisk University. The crisis exists at several levels. It is a fiscal crisis: the reduction in federal assistance and the lack of adequate philanthropic support. It is a crisis for students: a decline in student enrollment from almost 1800 students a decade ago to less than 700 today. It is a crisis for faculty and staff: the stonewalling from irresponsible administrators concerning the payment of pension and medical insurance funds, and the threat to professional standards by increasing teaching loads for 1983-84. Fisk's other problems are varied and many; for example strong evidence exists which indicates fiscal malfeasance and the deliberate diversion of grant monies into the pockets of a few.¹

The article continued by asserting that probably the greatest crisis which Fisk faced was a "crisis of vision." Moreover, several questions were raised, such as "is there a special need for a Fisk University? If so, what do we intend to offer Black students and Black America as a whole? Do we intend to survive into the twenty-first century?"²

Much of the tabloid's focus was on the president of Fisk, Walter Leonard. In fact, when recommendations were made, it


²Ibid.
was argued that in order to rectify the situation and save the university from a certain death, Leonard had to go:

Mr. Leonard has had the misfortune of being placed in a position of responsibility, lacking the intellectual and administrative tools to face the challenge of his office...to solve the crisis, the Fisk community must do three things at once: 1) Mr. Leonard must go and be replaced by a true scholar and competent administrator who will in turn actively consult with all members of the Fisk family in solving our collective problems; 2) Members of the Board of Trustees responsible for hiring and supporting Mr. Leonard's tragic and in many ways repugnant career should submit their resignation forthwith and 3) we urge Fisk Alumni and supporters nationwide to speak out against the corruption of the Leonard Administration to lance the boil and to rededicate themselves to the reconstruction of a new Fisk. If these steps are not taken, FISK WILL DIE, and we ourselves are to blame.3

The other reprinted articles made reference to major issues which had occurred at the University during Leonard's tenure, including a four week long student strike in 1980; an open letter to the president from a sophomore student; a presidential letter to the Dean of Student Affairs advising him to relay a message to the student body president, vice-president and the campus queen, Miss Fisk, that they would be expelled from school or have their financial aid stopped, if their activities of informing the students of the changes taking place on campus continued; and a report by the faculty assembly observers from the February 1983 Board of Trustees meeting which quoted the president as referring to

3Ibid.
members of the Fisk faculty as "Uncle Toms, Aunt Thomasinas, Judases, demagogues, saboteurs and white missionaries."4

Shortly after the publication of the tabloid, the Fisk faculty voted on April 1, 1983 "no confidence" in the president's leadership ability.5 A few days later, the ARA Service Company discontinued food service to the cafeteria because they had not received payment for an outstanding bill of more than 700,000 dollars. However, probably the most telling situation of how deep the fiscal crisis was, took place several months later, when the Board of Trustees would again try to weather the storm of protest over Leonard remaining as head of the university. The Fisk students had to go onto street corners begging for donations so as to get the gas turned on to heat the institution. Fisk indeed had gone full circle.6 The task of this chapter is to understand and explain part of that circle.

In order to correctly discuss the designated period, a brief review of Fisk immediately prior to 1977 and the arrival of the Leonard Administration is in order.

According to a University Self-Study conducted in 1978, Fisk was one of the better endowed Black colleges in the

4LaVelle Barnett, "President Says Faculty Observers Lied," Fisk Forum, 24 March 1983, p. 1. (See Appendix for Faculty Observer Report.)


country during the 1950s and 1960s. Its endowment was reported to have ranged from between 16 and 20 million dollars.\(^7\) The Fisk Board authorized the use of the university endowment to cover growing annual deficits. Such a practice nearly depleted the entire endowment and as the Figure below depicts led to the drastic liquidation of the school's endowment assets.

Decline in Fisk University Endowment

1968-1977

Source: The Tennessean
The institution did incur deficits but these were normally small operating deficits of "not more than thirty thousand dollars and usually less than fifteen thousand dollars."\(^8\)

The one exception where there was an operating surplus was during the 1975–1976 school term when the institution decreased faculty salaries by 20% and undertook a general scaledown in the scope of the colleges' operations. According to then vice-president of administration, Sherman Jones, "beginning in 1966–67, these deficits began to increase simultaneously with the infusion of outside university funding. While the University's revenues were increasing rapidly, expenditures were increasing even more rapidly; enrollments were increasing, but also was unfunded student financial aid."\(^9\)

As the expenditures and general operating costs increased, especially during the high inflationary years (1972–1975), the Fisk Board of Trustees allowed the University's endowment to be utilized to meet operating costs. The situation grew worse and eventually led to a severe financial crisis as the institution's endowment

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\(^9\)Ibid.
dwindled and newer sources of funding were not forthcoming.\(^{10}\)

The Fisk Board of Trustees, in an effort to address the situation it had helped create, decided that drastic changes had to be made if the institution was to survive. Jones recounts,

As the Board of Trustees attempted to confront the situation in 1974–75 by ordering drastic cutbacks in the level and scope of the University these actions served to cut back expenditures by approximately 25% within one year, thereby producing the operating surplus of $1,267 in 1975–1976; between 1973–1974 and 1975–1976 the size of the faculty was reduced from 130 full-time equivalent members to 72 and the administrative staff from approximately 100 persons to 65. But these actions did nothing to increase revenues flowing into the university. Indeed as a result of these actions...the University actually lost revenue. For example, enrollment plummeted between 1974 and 1977 going from almost 1600 students to approximately 1100 with concomitant losses in revenue from students; private gifts and grants also fell during this period going from almost $2 million in 1974 and 1975 to $1.1 million in 1977.\(^{11}\)

From the above it is quite clear that in 1977, Fisk University was not only suffering, but struggling for its very life. It is also very evident that the strategies employed by the Fisk Board of Trustees in addressing the growing fiscal problems were severely flawed. Furthermore,

\(^{10}\)Walter Leonard, Fisk University to Timothy Donaldson Chair Board of Trustees, Letter of Resignation 23 November 1983 (See Appendix B for full text.)

\(^{11}\)Jones, Financing Fisk, 2.
on an administrative level, the institution, prior to 1977, had two interim presidents, a growing outstanding debt and national speculation about the closure of Fisk, thereby further injuring recruitment activities. Perhaps a more significant, positive attribute to bear in mind was the existence of a spirit and a will to survive the difficult times together as the "Fisk Family" had always done. Many persons familiar with the institution believed that the most important ingredient missing and needed to maintain Fisk was sound administrative leadership and fiscal management.

For more than two academic years (between 1975–1977) the leadership question at Fisk remained unsolved. Because of this, certain funding agencies actually delayed forwarding grants already awarded to the institution. Finally, after a long search, a president was selected. Presently, there is much debate surrounding the selection process and in particular, the selection of Walter Leonard as the ninth president of Fisk University.

When Fisk begin its initial search for a permanent president in 1975–76, many names and professional vitae were submitted. One was that of Walter J. Leonard. He had served as an affirmative action officer and special assistant to the president of Harvard University.\(^{12}\) It is customary for search committees to check background

\(^{12}\)Leonard to Donaldson, 3.
information on potential candidates and this was the case at Fisk. When it was time to review information on Leonard, members of the Atlanta Fisk Club had forwarded data which suggested unethical and possible unlawful activity associated with Leonard's real estate business practices in Atlanta, Georgia. This information was ignored by the Board and several members of the search committee.

According to Leonard, Helen Vanderbilt, a member of the Board of Trustees at Fisk and Harvard Universities, told him that Fisk University needed his services.\(^{13}\) The Fisk Board, as a whole, also became convinced that the institution could not do without the services of Walter J. Leonard. The selection of Leonard was made over the objections of several student members of the search committee. These objections included the following points.

1) Walter Leonard had not provided the committee with any evidence of having graduated from any tertiary institution;
2) There was data available which suggested that Leonard was less than the most desirable administrator;
3) No record of Walter Leonard existed that showed that he had earned a doctoral degree or been granted an honorary degree, yet he submitted himself for candidacy as "Dr. Leonard".\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\)Leonard often boasted of this at a number of board meetings between 1980-84 during which time Vanderbilt never attended one meeting of the Board of Trustees.

\(^{14}\)Fisk University Student Government Association's Presidential Search Committee File, 1975-77.
In reviewing the selection process, it would seem that the Board of Trustees employed a type of paternalistic "if then" logic which suggested that if a person is good enough to be special assistant to the President of Harvard University, then that person obviously is good enough to be President of Fisk University. Perhaps Tony Brown, the noted Black journalist, has best described the result of such logic. He said of the Fisk situation,

The Fisk Board of Trustees was obviously impressed with "Harvard" and all of the white mythology it represents when choosing him (Leonard) to lead the school. It appears that the Fisk Board got exactly what it deserved.  

Even though the Board sought to be blinded by the "Harvard Halo" the Fisk students refused to be tricked by the mythology or even the oratorical ability of the newly selected President. In fact, the first issue of the student newspaper for the 1977-78 school year published a critical article of remarkable clarity and vision. The article warned the Fisk student body to beware of the changes that were certain to take place under Leonard who had helped to suppress legitimate student protest at Howard, Harvard and other universities. The editorial read in part,

My brothers and sisters, you may all rest easy! As it was promised in the Good Book, the savior, the messiah has come again! Instead of coming into the humble surroundings of a stable, he has come clad in regalia, heralding from Harvard

University. He is Walter J. Leonard!...He has come to save Fisk. Pull us up from the depths of financial decay, spiritual putrefaction and academic decadence...However, let me offer these warnings. First of all and foremost, beware of "the transition". The transition will be from Black liberal arts Fisk to "Oreo" liberal arts Fisk. In years to come, Fisk will be academically excellent and financially sound, but spiritually dead and insensitive. Why? Because Walter wishes to see us mass produced, assembly-line style scholars...Students beware that your rights and freedoms are systemically and quickly being diluted or erased. Remember that coed intra-dormitory visitation between consenting adults may get you sent home. And don't sit on the front porch of your dorm after midnight—it might cost you $62.50...The situation is so sad because Walter J. has the world duped. He's got the alumni thinking he's the savior. The Board of Trustees not only think he's the savior, they're sure! Why even some of us here are too, who seem impressed by the oratorical excellence of our Dr. Leonard (try as your may you won't find any record that the "Dr" received a doctor of philosophy degree anywhere). Fiskites oughta know better than to get sucked in by this display of finesse. People, don't settle into complacency. Stop, look and listen. The signs are...all around us. As it turns out the messiah has not yet come again. But let us not let our dire need for a messiah cause us to make this little big man into our savior.16

Leonard reacted angrily and even threatened disciplinary action against the editors, prompting them to print in subsequent editions, "The Joint Statement on Students Rights and Freedoms". Whatever it was that Robbie Banks, the author of the article, knew, others were either afraid to acknowledge or refused to believe.

One of the first signs of the "transition" began to unfold in early 1978 when the campus workers went on strike. The Fisk workers had historically been militant but since the school was experiencing financial trouble, the union attempted to accommodate the institution by requesting a modest cost of living increase. The administration offered the workers a five percent increase hourly wage over a three year period. When negotiations broke down, the workers went on strike. The University's administration had an injunction order issued preventing the workers from coming on the private campus. Once the sanitary conditions on the campus began to worsen, mediators were brought in to settle the dispute. The mediators found the union request to be reasonable. However, the administration refused to abide by the agreed terms. During the strike, another tactic became obvious which would later be exploited in a most vulgar manner. The student body was split over the issue mainly because of confusion and distortions spread by the administration regarding workers' demands, and a conscious policy of using students against students to neutralize any possible solidarity with the union's cause. Hence, because of the lack of clarity or consensus, the students, though clearly sympathetic to the workers demands, did not join in with their strike. Instead, several students organized teams to help keep dormitories clean.
Such antagonisms did not disappear. In fact, over the next few years they would grow deeper and occur more frequently. The critical factor in calling attention to the overall situation was the attack on student rights of which Robbie Banks had forewarned.

Fisk University was not just a liberal arts college. Fisk was perhaps the most liberal of the Black colleges, and the institution had a tradition of student concern with participation and involvement in the governance of the University. For example, while most Black colleges did not allow visitation, Fisk had very liberal visitation rules, including for freshman, that had been fought for and won by students. The respect, as adults, demanded by Fisk students made the paternalistic rules of other Black colleges, such as leaving doors open six inches during visitation, seem very archaic. Fisk also had students on the Board of Trustees, another victory won from student struggles in the 1960s and 1970s.

Rapid changes took place on the campus. Many were of minor significance, but when tallied together those changes added up to an all-out assault on student rights at Fisk. Freshman visitation was the first to go. It was eliminated in the 1978-1979 school term after an initial attempt met with active opposition by the freshman class of 1977-78. A few other examples will suffice to give a more candid picture of the repressive atmosphere on campus. The Fisk
tradition included an initiation process for freshman called "crab night". The administration reduced the event to "crab evening", amidst suggestions that they might otherwise eliminate the event altogether.¹⁷ No particular rationale was ever given for instituting such changes.

In the fall of 1978, the women occupants of Jubilee Hall, a National Historical Landmark, decided to sleep in the school's library as an act of protest over the poor upkeep of the building by the administration and the Tennessee Historical Society Jubilee Hall had been designated a national historical site by the United States Department of the Interior. The students believed such action was necessary because the ceiling in one student's room had actually fallen in on her bed. Luckily, she was not in bed at the time. After sleeping in the library for two days the women students requested other students join their protest. A group of male students responded and decided to occupy the third floor of the library, while the women were to remain on the first floor.

The President of the University, however, believed that he should intervene personally to prevent the young men from acting in solidarity with the women students. As the President escorted the security force, of about 10 men, to the library to remove the men, the young women placed

themselves on the steps and pointed out that all Fisk students should protest the ridiculous living conditions in Jubilee Hall. The President, according to eyewitnesses, proceeded to climb the round stair case. Pushing and shoving ensued. The President, who was now walking on the outside of the ledge, fell and was hanging on for his life by one hand as the Chairman of the pre-Alumni Council, Donald Shipley, grabbed him and pulled him to safety.18 At that point, many of the security guards began dragging the women students down the steps, slapping a few in the process. The most obvious question is why would a college president even put himself in such a position?

In the early fall of 1979, a male student and a woman companion, decided to travel to Atlanta, Georgia, for the annual Fisk versus Morehouse football game. Along the way, an exchange of words led to him being left on the highway by his friend when they stopped for gas in North Georgia. He subsequently thumbed a ride to the stadium hotel where he had made reservations, and found his friend there. In a fit of anger, he slapped and scolded the young woman because he maintained that a truck driver who had given him a lift had also taken all his money.19

18Donald Shipley, interview by author, Tape recording, Nashville, TN, 1 December 1980.

Upon arriving back at the Fisk campus, the President, who had been contacted by the young woman's mother, suspended the young man from school without granting him any kind of hearing. The student government association, while obviously not condoning the student's behavior, intervened to raise the question of due process, and also the question of the school's jurisdiction over the activities of two adults in another state. Tensions mounted on campus to the point where a town meeting had to be held in the chapel. The President addressed the concerns of the students and exclaimed that he had authority over any student enrolled at Fisk University "from Maine to Miami".

Toward the end of the assembly, as the President was leaving from the chapel, one student asked him if he thought he was "Hitler or somebody". The President responded by saying "your daddy". To another student who said "you must think you're bad", the President told him, "I'll take you behind here (the chapel) and kick your ass".20

The aforementioned examples, and especially the extended quote of Robbie Banks, present a more coherent picture of the repressive campus atmosphere which was significant in the destruction of an acceptable social environment, so important to the adequate functioning of a

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20This incident is discussed also in Marable, *Quiet Death*, 39.
university. Moreover, it seems that many of the differences could have been handled in a less antagonistic manner. As the campus life and communication with the administration deteriorated further, the students decided they had had enough.

Fisk students had historically been in the forefront of the struggle for progressive social and educational change. A radical tradition among Fisk students can be traced as far back as the early 1920s, when Fisk students initiated the call for Black administrators (presidents in particular) at the Black colleges.21

This tradition continued into the late 1940s and early 1950s, with emergence of DuBois Clubs to show support for Dr. DuBois, who had become an advocate for peace and was being persecuted by the United States Government.22 Dr. DuBois was invited to speak on campus by the students and alumni many times to explain his position on African liberation, human rights for African Americans and world peace. Fisk, as mentioned earlier, served as the nerve center for the "freedom rides" and the leadership of SNCC for more than half of the organization's existence. In

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22 Fisk University was in fact one of the few places where Dr. DuBois was given a platform to articulate his views on peace and the anti-colonial struggle during the repressive McCarthyism period.
addition, Fisk was the first Black college to popularize the slogan "Black Power."

The Fisk students in 1980, were similar to those who had gone before them: they were intelligent and active. Moreover, many of the student leaders had participated in the anti-apartheid March in 1978. As a result of the Leonard administration, most of the students had been "schooled in conflicts."

In any situation where poor communications exist, issues such as trust and respect become very important. It was a rather strange sequence of events that led to the major schism between the students and the administration. In fact, it has been suggested that even though the outcome of the student boycott was clouded, it was the efforts by students which heightened awareness around the critical situation that existed at Fisk.

At a faculty assembly meeting on March 20, 1980, two issues were brought before the assembly by the students. Monica Willis, student government President, addressed a recently circulated memorandum released by the administration regarding campus housing changes.

In her statement, she pointed out how once again no students had been involved in the decision or consulted about the matter prior to the decision being made and the statement being released. Students were concerned, she explained, because radical changes in the housing
arrangements could influence many students to transfer and Fisk could not afford to lose any more students. The faculty assembly chair, Professor George Neely, noted the faculty's concern that students should not be overlooked, especially regarding issues that may impact upon the campus environment. He then asked as a point of departure to the second issue, that the faculty begin to seriously consider its role with respect to student concerns outside the classroom. Dr. Neely then read a letter from other "concerned" students as well as a memorandum from the President.

Both referred to an incident where the Chief of Campus Security had physically assaulted a male student, choking him to such a degree that the student needed medical attention at nearby Meharry Medical Center. The President's memo advised the faculty not to be involved in any investigation of the matter on their own unless they coordinated their efforts with the Chief of Security. The student letter, signed by Keith Jennings and Natalie Burnette, said that the student government was either unable or unwilling to get involved and that the Dean of Student Affairs thought it a matter not worth considering. The meeting ended with the assembly generally agreeing to become more involved with student issues and concerns, beginning with finding out about the condition of the assaulted student. It was later learned that the student government
had not become involved earlier because it was involved in a legal battle with the administration over their right to bring former Black Panther leader, Huey Newton, to the campus.

However, later that evening hundreds of students decided to occupy the library in protest over the administrative decision to rearrange campus housing by placing men on one side of the campus and women on the other. The protest was begun because the erosion of student rights had now led to students' maturity being insulted under the guise of providing more security. The night of March 20, 1980, saw a closing of the ranks among the students. The football team organized themselves for "security purposes" in the library. There was approximately 95 percent student participation the first night of the protest. For the next three weeks, classes were boycotted and finally the university was completely taken over and shutdown.

The students demanded to be heard. However, the administration and the Board of Trustees continued to ignore

24 Ibid.
them. Daily noon-time marches rallied the mass of students. Most afternoons were reserved for mass meetings on the campus to explain the forces behind the struggle and to establish the plans for the next day or days of events. The high point of the struggle was reached at the March 26, 1980 ceremonies conducted to reopen the historic Fisk Race Relations Institute. The day before, the 25th, the President addressed a student-organized town meeting. At that meeting after making students wait for almost thirty minutes to listen to his prepared statement, the President said he did not "need Fisk University" and further refused to answer any of the students' questions. Additionally, he refused any comment on a restraining order he had taken out against the democratically elected Student Government Association's leaders, Miss Fisk and other student leaders, or why he had threatened to make the semester "null and void" unless the students returned to class.\(^\text{27}\) The arrogance displayed by the President eliminated all hope of a possible compromise. Moreover, the restraining order, which barred students from occupying the administration buildings, levelled charges against two students who were not even in the city of Nashville when the student protest began.\(^\text{28}\)

\(^{27}\)Ibid.

\(^{28}\)Pam Calloway, interview by author, Tape recording, Nashville, TN, 30 March 1980.
As Leonard was leaving the Chapel, surrounded by several security guards, angry students began throwing paper at him. A student leader, immediately ran on the stage and requested that the students "let him leave." The student leader pointed out that a more thought out and less emotional response would be achieved democratically. That night at the campus radio station WRFN, which had also been taken over by students, a meeting of student leaders was held. The discussion about what would be an appropriate response, led to a proposal, from the more radical students, to walk out on the President as he had walked out on the students the following day at the opening of the Race Relations Institute. The more moderate student government leadership argued that "we must do the unexpected, and they expect us to walk out, therefore we should stay." Once it was shown how little sense it made to stay in the chapel, a vote was taken. The results were 13 in favor of staying and 15 for walking out. Because of the closeness of the vote, the student leaders were ambivalent about how receptive the student body might be to the idea.

Nevertheless, the decision was made known to the students and enthusiastically supported. On March 26, at the Chapel, the program in honor of the reopening of the Fisk Race Relations Institute, founded by Charles S. Johnson, began at 11 a.m. Speaker after speaker rose to the podium and was greeted by the 1,000 students with applause.
The student leaders had insisted upon the utmost respect being shown for the Johnson family and guests of Fisk. However, when the President proceeded to approach the podium the students arose en masse and walked out of the Chapel in a very orderly and silent procession leaving behind approximately fifty faculty, administrators and guests in the audience.29

One student who did remain in the Chapel, and was a supporter of the student protest, said that when the President began to speak, he said, "I am reminded of another who wore a crown of thorns, and I too say Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Outside the Chapel, on the University's oval, the students were having a rally to assess the entire protest effort and the act they had just carried out. The lines had indeed been drawn and the small liberal arts college could not maintain itself under those circumstances. One quote here will suffice to express the true magnitude of what was taking place at Fisk University in the spring of 1980. In a letter dated March 27, 1980, Dr. Nelson Fuson wrote the following to the President of the institution:

I submit this letter...in the spirit of sharing with you my concern for Fisk at this critical moment in its history. I deeply regret the impasse which currently exists between yourself and the Fisk University student body as led by their Student Government Association officers. Fisk University will suffer greatly from any

29Bolger, Protest Chronicle, 5.

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prolongation of this impasse. This is, of course not the first time that sharp differences of opinion have occurred between segments of the Fisk community...In my thirty-one years here at Fisk, I have personally experienced, particularly at the end of the sixties, some of these. But I have never seen the student body united in opposition to a Fisk administration decision as I have had this week. While I have no firm statistics, on the basis of my contacts with students in my office during office hours, and as I have met my classes, I would estimate that 90 to 95 percent of the student body supports the SGA in its present position. I personally urge you to reconsider your decision...I believe that the faculty assembly chairman George Neely's memo to you on 24 March 1980 is an appropriate compromise behind which all components of the Fisk Family can rally...I also urge you to drop legal action pending against SGA officers and others, for I firmly believe that this will be an important and essential contribution to bring [an end to this unfortunate situation].

The Neely memorandum referred to by Professor Fuson, contained a section that requested that the physical security measures proposed for each dormitory consistent with the quad-living proposal be made prior to the beginning of 1981-82 school term, but, that current dormitory living arrangements be maintained for the 1980-81 school term. The faculty also registered its disappointment with the administration for obtaining a restraining order against student leaders. The reference in the Neely memo suggested that "the assembly regrets that the University has taken

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30 Fuson to Leonard, 1.
legal action and demands that the University withdraw all legal action against students."^{31}

The students had their own explanation for the heavy handed policies of the Leonard administration. This position was summarized in an article submitted to the *Fisk Forum* by Laurette Thymes as follows,

...The administration has taken upon itself the right to judge the moral character of individuals...This institution is being governed by fear. Why such drastic changes on campus are being made calls attention to several facts. There has recently been an upsurge of improvements in the North Nashville community. Jefferson Street has been widened, paved and many of the dilapidated abandoned buildings are being torn down. Excellent, I hear you say! Jefferson Street needs much improvement! However, do you realize that the land along Jefferson is being purchased by white industrialists...have you stopped to realize that the land along Jefferson and in the North Nashville area is owned by small Black entrepreneurs and land-owners whose lives have been dedicated to this area in spite of its impoverished conditions?...Changes happening so near the Fisk campus must affect the atmosphere and governing of the University. Is Fisk preparing for the change of Black North Nashville? The efforts made to give the University a stiff white-collar appeal would indicate that the answer to that question is yes.^{32}

Student actions continued for two more weeks. Programs were held in the community, student leaders were sent out of town to address alumni clubs and a mock funeral was held for student rights. The President was burned in effigy, had

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^{31}George Neely (on behalf of Faculty Assembly) to Walter Leonard, June 1980, Special Collections, Fisk University, Nashville.

^{32}Thymes, *Student Rights*, 4.
trash thrown on his lawn and his residence hit by a barrage of rocks. Another important aspect of the student protest was the religious content of many of the actions such as regular noon marches around the administration building seven times as the biblical character Joshua had done at Jericho, and the visible role of several Black mass choir members.

As the middle of April was rapidly approaching all sides involved knew that something had to give as the end of the semester was near. A timely intervention by the Dean and Provost of the University, Clifford Harper, represented the last attempt at compromise. Harper invited to his office all student leaders and several faculty members to explain the academic impact of missing any more class time without instruction taking place. He admitted that the situation thus far was totally mishandled in his opinion and suggested that the meeting he was having was on his own initiative.33 Dr. Theodore Sykes, Vice-Chair of the Faculty Assembly, also provided thoughtful remarks as the student leaders listened carefully to all they had to say.

After the meeting in the Dean's office, although differences remained among the student leaders over which course of action to follow, it was agreed that the matter would and must be decided democratically by the student

33Clifford Harper to Walter Leonard, 12 June 1980, Special Collection, Fisk University, Nashville.
body. Toward that end, a town meeting was called to decide what students would do. At that town meeting, students were informed of what the Dean had outlined and listened to the student leaders' different views on what they thought should be done. Several people spoke for and against continuing the boycott. The more radical student elements were not certain about being able to sustain the strike any longer; however they believed that should they give in, nothing would have been achieved with respect to student demands. It was here that the lack of training becomes clear. From the available data, it seems that the question should have been, according to one student leader, "how can we continue the fight another way?" A number of questions were raised regarding the lifting of the restraining order that had been placed on the student government association officials and other leaders. The status of that situation could not be given because only the President and the school's attorney knew. Many more mature students, especially seniors, maintained that it was not necessarily a bad idea to return to class because the faculty, staff and Fisk Alumni all had begun to respect the student body and listen to their grievances, and many of the main student leaders would be back the next year. It was argued that all underclassmen should return and continue the fight to expose the reactionary policies of the Leonard Administration and the

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systematic destruction of Fisk University under his leadership.

On April 14, 1980 the student boycott ended. Eleven days later, a new student government association was elected. The student house of representatives advised all students who had not participated in the boycott to forget about running for any office. The Dean of Student Affairs on behalf of the Administration, after having dropped the restraining order against the SGA, released a memorandum saying that any student in good standing that met the qualifications could run for student government office. The Dean's response only added fuel to the fire as the students most certainly endorsed the house of representative's statement through their votes. The elections were held and some of the more militant strike leaders were elected to office. However, the attack on student rights did not end there. In a memorandum dated June 2, 1980, the Dean of Student Affairs advised all dormitory directors that the student government officers would not be allowed to live on campus during the summer months and must vacate the dormitories immediately.\(^{34}\) In the memo, there was no mention of the students having the option of paying even if they desired to do so. This marked the first time since the student government had been reorganized in the 1920's that

\(^{34}\)John Harwell, Dean of Student Affairs, to Mrs. Otey, Dorm Director, 2 June 1980, Special Collections, Fisk University, Nashville.
the officers had been kicked off campus during the summer months. The new officers obtained a stipend for an operating budget from the Nashville Fisk Club. This was necessary because access to the regular SGA budget had also been restricted by the Administration. The new SGA officers continued fighting by informing students that five faculty members and two deans had been dismissed, primarily for their supportive role during the student protest. In addition, the SGA officers informed the students that a six-foot barbed wire fence had been erected around the campus with guard shacks placed on the different ends of it. As a result of the activities of the new SGA officer, they received a copy of a threatening letter from the President to the Dean of Student Affairs, John Harwell, which included the following:

After a goodly amount of thought, it is my considered conclusion that some official action must be taken regarding the irresponsible and institutionally destructive conduct attributable to the above named students. These students have, for more than five months engaged in, encouraged and supported, activities calculated to denigrate the institution, slander persons and officials associated with Fisk, and convey through the media and the mail non-truths through which strangers, parents, students--present and potential--alumni, donors and friends could easily [be] led to erroneous and damaging conclusions about the school.35

35Walter Leonard to John Harwell. Full text Appendix B.
The President's letter concluded after a number of other allegations against the student government by saying to the Dean,

you might wish to advise these students that they have reached our destination of tolerance and suffering. Further you might inform them that future acts of disruption, violence, misrepresentation and interference with the normal administrative and academic procedures of the University could result in one or more of the following:

1) cancellation or suspension of University scholarship and other financial support
2) disciplinary probation or suspension
3) expulsion from Fisk University.

The student leaders reacted by hiring an attorney and boldly challenging the administration on what they saw as unethical threats and cheap character assassination. The administration fired the Dean of the Chapel, banned the Black Mass Choir from singing in the Chapel and went as far as changing the locks on the door to the Chapel.37

Serious antagonisms still existed on the campus. The appointment of Sherman Jones as Dean and Provost was also an issue the student leaders pointed to as representing increasingly repressive moves by the Leonard administration. Jones was widely viewed as Leonard's "hatchet man." In

36Ibid., 2.

fact, only after one year, the Faculty Assembly would agree with the students, citing

"...Acting Dean Jones' heavy-handed dealings with students and faculty have contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty about rules, regulations, requirements and procedures. Many upperclassmen have expressed their desire to go elsewhere."38

But in the midst of the obvious chaos on the campus, the Fisk administration presented to the Board of Trustees, "A Plan for Financing Fisk". This plan suggested that Fisk was charging its students below what the current market price of education for institutions comparable to Fisk charged. Moreover, the proposed plan suggested that because Fisk relied more heavily on tuition and fees, they should be the "plug factor" in meeting their annual operating budget. Hence, it was argued, significant increases in both should occur. Increases did occur for the 1980-81 school term. Tuition was set at $3750 up from $2650, a 41.5% increase; the fees were set at $300 up from $200, a 50% increase; room charges at $1200, up from $1000, a 20% increase; and board at $735 up from $625, 15.7% increase. The total package went from $4485 to $5985, a 33.4% increase.39 The Fisk faculty drew this conclusion regarding the impact of the increases:

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38Fisk Faculty Assembly Report to the Fisk Board of Trustees, 14 May 1981, 5, photocopied.

39Ibid., 4.
The dramatic drop in the enrollment figure for the fall 1980, a 12.8% decrease in comparison to 1978, and a 8.6% decrease in comparison to 1979, may well be attributed to the increased costs of Fisk education.\(^{40}\)

The Board of Trustees endorsed the new plan, without thoroughly comprehending what its impact might be and encouraged its immediate implementation. This was perhaps the largest increase ever in one semester at any Black institution of higher learning.

From a strictly economic stand point, the proposed plan seemed reasonable to the board members. If tuition and fees were made the "plug factor", while exhausting all available federal financial aid (which was assumed to be constant or fixed), more marginal revenue would be available, especially if gifts and grants outdistanced what was expected. The only factor needed was an outward shifting "demand curve" to attend Fisk. In other words, the desire to matriculate at the institution had to increase as the quality of the "educational package" would attract students until some optimal level was reached. That level was thought to be 1,150 students. The "educational package" was the commodity to be marketed by the University and purchased by the student and his or her parents. The demand curve to attend Fisk did shift but in the opposite direction as the campus crisis worsened.

\(^{40}\)Ibid.

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The next two years would be more of the same, continuous and unnecessarily antagonistic relations between the administration and the students, an almost complete lack of respect for the Faculty by the administration, and a Board of Trustees which preferred not to be involved. All told, by 1983 a deep crisis was apparent to anyone familiar with academic institutions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE</th>
<th>% CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977 - 1978</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 - 1979</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>1,048</td>
<td>-109</td>
<td>-9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979 - 1980</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>-44</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 - 1981</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>-108</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 - 1982</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>-119</td>
<td>-13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Decline in Fisk University Student Enrollment

Source: Faculty Assembly Reports
The decline in student enrollment was a critical factor. The decline in absolute numbers between the fall of 1977 and the spring of 1984 was 622 students or an astounding 55.3% in that seven year period. In the case of Fisk, some of the decline, it was argued by the administration, was due to normal attrition, academic dismissal or problems associated with financing the cost of attending the University. Moreover, in that same time period the cost of attending Fisk University increased by 57% from $3,900 to $6,900. This latter factor obviously caused many potential and current students to decide to attend school elsewhere, especially with Fisk charging almost $2,000 more than its traditional competitors. The reasons for the high attrition rate from one semester to another however, still was not understood in any depth.

In addition, the combination of the accumulated debt and lack of fundraising lead to severe cash flow problems leading to major bills not being paid. The table below provides a more accurate listing of the magnitude of this problem.
TABLE 6.2

FISK UNIVERSITY INDEBTEDNESS, NOVEMBER 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CREDITOR</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRS - Payroll Taxes</td>
<td>$114,736.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Industrial Bonds</td>
<td>$111,654.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUD Bonds (principle and interest)</td>
<td>$212,021.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARA Food Services</td>
<td>$716,835.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIAA-CREF (University Contribution)</td>
<td>$143,045.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Electric Service</td>
<td>$212,330.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Board of Trustees Report

The lack of funds meant that choices and priorities were being made about essential programs. Yet, because of the management style of the Leonard administration, the lack of communication, necessary to discuss what priorities were most important, led to confusion over the governance of the University and the Learning Resource Center suffering, and a number of other concerns. For example, the Faculty Assembly reported to the Board that the administration refused to forward the Assembly report, because "it had not received it prior to the necessary date for proper distribution."

Fisk Faculty concerns over governance of the University included:

The Faculty Handbook
Denial of Tenure
Governance of the University
Enrollment Problems
Refusal to Give A Key to University Organist for the Chapel
The Process of Decision Making Regarding Notification of Non-reappointment41

Under the heading "Administration Not Following AAUP Guidelines, the report stated,

The faculty is very concerned about the poor communication between the administration and the faculty. In recent years, the administration's failure to respond to actions and requests of the faculty has established a pattern of non-cooperation which has impaired the orderly functioning of the University and has contributed to low morale among the faculty.

While it is impossible to identify any trend, we would comment on the 12.5% drop from a high of 1157 in the fall of 1978, to a low of 1009 in the fall of 1980. Moreover, we would emphasize an even sharper decline from a high of 1093 in Spring 1978, to a low of 901 in Spring 1981, a decline of 17.6%.

All these figures since 1977-78 are much lower than the average enrollment in the preceding five years which was 1473 for the fall, 1399 for the Spring.42

In planning for 1980-1981, the anticipated enrollment, assumed by the President in his 1980 report, was 1150 students. It was also assumed in the construction of the budget. According to the Follow-up Report, the strategy for improving the financing at Fisk was based on a reduction of the University's dependence on external funding by generating income over which it would have greater control. The claim was that enrollment had become stable at

41Ibid., 2.
42Ibid., 3.
approximately 1100 students which is verified by the data for 1977 through 1979, but the figure is much lower than the average for 1972 to 1977. It was proposed that in developing the 1980-81 budget, the University use tuition and fees as the plug factor in the revenue budget. That means that after the expenditure budget had been set and revenues from the government, private gifts and grants, and investments had been realistically determined on a conservative basis, the level of tuition and fees was set to meet the financing objectives. The Faculty's report commented further on these assumptions by saying,

In addition, the faculty is concerned about the attrition in the classes of '82 and '83. It is not enough to attribute the current smaller size of the student body to increased fees and to improved standards of admission. The faculty recognizes other factors. Last spring, during the controversy over greater security for dormitories, the faculty disagreed with the administration's handling of the matter, an excessively hang tough posture which was a cause for some upperclassmen deciding to complete their college studies at another institution. Moreover, during the current academic year (1980-81), Acting Dean Jones' heavy handed dealings with students and faculty have contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty about rules, regulations, requirements and procedures. Many upperclassmen have expressed their desire to go elsewhere. In conversations with faculty, students have complained about administrative decisions and about the rigidity and excessive red tape in the administration. They have also expressed the sentiment that they have no voice in the University, that there is the absence of an atmosphere of trust and a general feeling that "things ain't together."

The faculty brings these matters to the Board because, we think there is a crisis that must be addressed. The crisis stems from a combination of factors -- increased fees, a posture of the
administration that strikes students and faculty, as unnecessarily rigid at times, cruel, an isolation of the administration from both faculty and students. One that has grown wider and deeper during the past twelve months. The faculty is unhappy about the leadership in the University. It cannot be silent as the student body grows dangerously small.\textsuperscript{43}

The Fisk University Board of Trustees never responded to the faculty's 1981 report. In fact, the Board never even questioned the President about his procedural objection to the report being distributed. Kean, in fact, refused to meet with the Faculty Assembly to discuss the obvious crisis at the university, even after the faculty observers had pleaded with him to do so. He explained his refusal by standing behind bureaucratic procedures suggesting that the faculty should "go through proper channels to voice their concerns to the board." In response to Kean and the Board's refusal to meet in the crisis, the student newspaper editorial argued the following:

"The faculty is concerned about their exclusion from academic planning, about poor communication, unaccountability and uncertain management on the part of the president and the administration. The faculty, having lobbied their grievances to President Leonard, without success, sought to air their complaints to the Executive Committee of the Board.

Chairman Kean answered the faculty by saying that 'the faculty should go through proper channels...'. Kean also expresses in his letter that the 'Fisk Family' should unite during these times of difficulty...The Fisk Family should place its trust in him (Dr. Leonard) to solve the university's problems and let the Board (whose

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 5.
thinking patterns are blueprints of his) handle the crisis. Perhaps the biggest question, but simplest questions is: Why? Why should students and teachers sit idle while their school is withering away before their eyes?

Who are these persons who say students and faculty should do this? Who are they? They are people who have seldom, if ever, walked the halls or visited one of the rooms of the dormitories; who have never sat in on a class lecture; who have never attended student activities; who have never dined in Spence Dining Hall...who have never gone to the Fisk University library to write a paper and discovered that there were not enough books or periodicals (old or new) to support their paper...

We must now ask how can we entrust the problems of Fisk to only Dr. Leonard and the Board when they aren't aware of what half of our problems are? Those problems, beyond the obvious financial crisis, they are oblivious to or choose to ignore.

Within a short time period of writing of his memo, it was announced by Leonard that Kean would not return as Chairman next year. If Dr. Leonard and other Board members and administrators fail to cooperate and communicate with students and faculty, it is in the best interest of the university that they follow the identical course of the Chairman at once. 44

However, the Fisk Faculty never gave up. In its 1983 report, the faculty assembly again raised concerns in three general areas, governance of the institution, which included the continued exclusion of the faculty from the planning for the University's academic affairs, the situation of the Fisk University Library and the University's medical and pension plans. The report stated that there existed,

Poor communication by the administration, no accountability to the faculty and uncertain management of the University. At a time when the talents and energies of all persons at Fisk need to be focused on the revival of the University, the administrative leadership becomes more isolated, less communicative, stingier with information and apparently without a plan for renewal. Examples of poor communication included:

The decision to have minor concentration in Computer Science, Health Care Administration and Mass Communication was made last spring. No notification was sent to the faculty until late October 1982.

The President approved last June the transfer of the Department of History into the Division of Social Science, the faculty was not notified until November 15. 45

Under no accountability, the report stated:

While it may be necessary to reduce the size of the faculty, the "proposal" to increase the teaching load for each faculty member to 15 hours has not been formally presented with clear indication of the pedagogical implications for the liberal arts tradition of the University. 46

The report continued with an outline of the dismal situation of the University's library. It cited:

Financial problems may make the acquisition of books temporarily impossible, and the incorporation of the few that do come in difficult, because of problems with the duplication of library cards and with binding, but the interruption of subscriptions to journals and reference materials is even more damaging to the instructional mission of the University. Most journals are not current. In addition, such basic reference sources as the following have not been current for a period now approaching two years:

45Fisk Faculty Assembly, "Report to the Fisk University Board of Trustees," (Nashville: Fisk University, 1983) 1, photocopied.

46Ibid., 2.
Bibliographical Index; Biography Index; Book Review Index; Books in Print; Contemporary Authors; Current Biography; Encyclopedia of Business Information Sources; Essay and General Literature Index; Humanities Index; Information Please Almanac; McGraw Hill Yearbook of Science and Technology; New York Times Index; Political Science Annual; Readers Guide to Periodical Literature; Social Science Index; Who's Who in America.  

In addition, the report points out that the pride of the institutions, Fisk University Special Collections, had not been able to acquire the following basic reference works:

Afro-USA; Biography Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians, Bibliography of Black Music; the Black Resource Guide; Blacks in Selected Newspapers, Censuses and other Sources; Dictionary of American Biography; Index to Black American Writers in Collective Biographers; Index to Periodicals by and about Negroes; the Progress of Afro-American Women; A Selected Bibliography and Resource Guide; 250 Years of Afro-American Art; an Annotated Bibliography; Who's Who in Black Corporate America.

Finally, the faculty expressed its concern regarding the apparent delay of the University in making payments to the medical and pension funds, after repeatedly asking for voluntary compliance with the University's obligation to make payments in a timely fashion. Another impasse had been reached:

At its December 1982 meeting, the Fisk Faculty Assembly voted to seek legal advice with regard to the medical and pension plans. On January 19, 1983, the faculty requested from Mr. Bell copies

47 Ibid., 3.

48 Ibid.
of the plans with Provident Mutual and with TIAA-CREF, as well as a schedule of payments made by the University to the two plans during calendar year 1981 and 1982. On January 19, Mr. Bell by phone reported that the President wanted such requests to be sent to him. On that same day, January 19, a letter was sent to President Leonard asking for copies of the plans. Reference was made in both letters to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) which clearly supports the right to obtain copies of the plans. Since the faculty has not yet received copies of the plans, from the president, it has not yet decided which action to pursue.

Among the remedies open to the Faculty are the following:

1) The faculty could report the violations to the Department of Labor.
2) The faculty could sue for violation of fiduciary responsibility.49

The Faculty's February 1983 Report concluded with a plea for cooperation. They said,

Many Fisk faculty have the interest and knowledge to help set University priorities as well as to write grant proposals to further develop scarce resources. We would like to be a part of the struggle for Fisk's future.50

Despite all the aforementioned information, the Fisk Board refused to meet with the Faculty Assembly or respond. Instead, the Board offered Leonard a new five-year contract despite the opposition from students, the faculty and some alumni. Indeed, it seemed as if Fisk University was being destroyed systematically and eventually would suffer a meaningless death.

49Ibid., 4.
50Ibid.
Leonard was not nor could he be the blame for all that was wrong at Fisk. Leonard was, as the secretly distributed tabloids stated, a person placed in a position of authority of responsibility who did not possess the skills and talent to perform effectively. Hence, it is in order that a closer review of the Fisk Board of Trustees and the role that they played during the tenure of the Leonard administration be undertaken here.

For more than six years, the Fisk Board of Trustees seemed to have a "see no evil, hear no evil," and do nothing policy. How else can one explain the board's reluctance to get involved in solving the worker's strike of 1978; the four week long student boycott of 1980; the ignoring of faculty reports in 1981 and 1983, and the faculty vote of no confidence in April of 1983; or the request of several alumni clubs that Leonard not be granted a new five-year contract?

The board chairman, Robert Kean, who was the chief executive officer of New Jersey Waterworks (and brother to the Governor of New Jersey) seemed to believe that the president's view of what was occurring at the institution was "the reality." And through his leadership the Fisk board often refused to hear any other voices or received information to the contrary of what the president and his administration was relaying to them. The student body often
pointed this out whenever and wherever possible, including
at the actual board meetings.

The process of providing board members with
information, even from the president's office was as
follows: approximately ten minutes prior to the beginning of
a board meeting the board members would receive the minutes
from the previous meeting to be approved along with a number
of usually large reports. They were expected to review the
reports and to make decisions from them. The reports were
hardly ever fully discussed except when presentations from
the administration were made on them.

Kean was also fond of asserting his view at board
meetings, when criticisms of Leonard were being made, of how
articulate the president was and the need for the board to
be proud of such an eloquent representative whose grasp of
Fisk history was probably greater than that of any recent
Fisk president. The liberal paternalism was always greeted
by Leonard because many times accompanying it was a new vote
of confidence by board members in Leonard as president of
Fisk University.

Two examples of the board's behavior will provide a
more adequate view of how the Fisk board of trustees
operated. On one occasion Leonard informed the director of
personnel to give him a $5,000 raise plus $10,000 in
"unutilized" vacation pay. The board upon learning of this
did not object to such methods but sanctioned it even though
a new contract had not been finalized or signed by the
president. On another occasion, it was widely understood
that an official university audit, conducted by outside
accountants, revealed an unusual practice associated with
the way in which institutional funds were being deposited
into the Fisk University bank account. The audit showed
that financial gifts and grants received were normally
reported much later and since the board had authorized the
president to be the only person to deposit Fisk funds
personally, where the funds were between the time received
and the time deposited in the university's account was left
open to speculation. Moreover, there was evidence that
suggested the funds were being deposited in the personal
account of the president and later transferred to the
university's account. The board never raised one question
with respect to the findings of the auditors. It would seem
that the practice, if not illegal, was certainly unethical
especially at an institution suffering from severe cash flow
problems.

One can only wonder what the different board members
would have done even at the suggestion that one of their
employees had engaged in such practices. It is quite
obvious from general business knowledge that they not only
would have fired that employee but prosecuted him/her as
well.
The composition of the Fisk University Board of Trustees and their orientation toward the educational process is also a very important indicator with regards to how the board functioned.

Fisk University, being a Black liberal arts institution, tended to attract liberal whites from the corporate and religious world, noted Black academicians, public officials and a few "philanthropists" who rarely ever showed up for board meetings.

The Fisk Board's selection process was similar to most other colleges, Black or white. Persons already on the board would suggest the names of potential members. At Fisk the president played an unusually large role in determining who would or would not be on the board. Several of his appointees stood by him until the end arguing that the board should refuse to accept his resignation. This unusually large determining role extended to the granting of honorary degrees and other important matters, academic functions as well.

The Fisk Board of Trustees included distinguished Black historian Dr. John Franklin (one time chairman of the board); Wesley Hotchkiss, General Secretary of the Board of Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ; ROOTS author Alex Haley; multimillionaire Helen C. Vanderbilt; James Atwood, Chief Executive Office of Hospital Corporation of America; U.S. Congressman Harold Ford (D, TN); Wade

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McCree, former U.S. Solicitor General; John Garner, Vice President of 3M Corporation; Timothy Donaldson, international financier and former Governor of the Bank of Bahamas; Charles Warfield, Chief Legal Counsel for Third National Bank, Nashville's largest bank; and Lloyd Elalm, Chancellor of Meharry Medical College. The board also had on it noted alumni members including Judge L. Howard Bennett, Barbara Lord Watkins, Axel Hanson and Hassel McCollan, all of whom proved to be important actors in ending the tenure of Walter Leonard at Fisk.

While a complete analysis of the board is beyond the scope of this study, it is nevertheless important to review briefly the findings of a New York based research and fund raising organization which conducted extensive research on Fisk and its Board of Trustees during 1983.

The Oram Group, which was employed by the administration with Board approval, had the assigned task of accessing the prospects for launching a major capital fund campaign for Fisk University. In the interviews it conducted, the following strengths and weaknesses of the Fisk Board of Trustees were listed.

**Strengths**

1. Business representation both from Nashville and nationally, may be somewhat better than at most Black Colleges we have served, but is inferior to that of comparable white institutions,

2. Interested board members regard themselves as reasonably well informed,
3. Adequate to strong alumni representation on the board.

**Weaknesses**

1. The trustees are viewed in Nashville, and by most alumni interviewed around the country, as apparently unwilling or unable to effect solutions to Fisk's periodical financial crisis,

2. Preoccupation with the financial problems and with internal institutional problems stemming largely from the lack of funds had resulted in a crisis orientation which has prevented the development of a strategic plan for a national campaign tapping trustees and other's strengths and relationships fully,

3. While the Trustees make financial contributions, some sacrificially, potential does not exist from among present membership to provide pace-setting campaign gifts in context of a multi-million dollar campaign,

4. At least in recent years, the Board membership has been overwhelmingly national and absentee. To provide closer access to the Nashville community more Nashville based senior leaders are needed as trustees.\(^{51}\)

Besides the above statements on strengths and weaknesses of the Fisk Board of Trustees, another major organizational problem was pointed out by the Oram Group. The researchers argued that the lack of coordination of all fund raising activities through the development office coupled with the lack of in-house expertise in that office meant that fund raising capabilities were severely limited.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{52}\) Ibid.
Another major factor in placing the Fisk Board of
Trustees in perspective relates to their outlook on the role
of Black Colleges such as Fisk. Perhaps, the Fisk Board of
Trustees prevailing educational orientation was no different
than that of any other college trustee board today. The
dominant educational posture maintained by the Board was
clearly shaped by their own positions in the society at
large and the nature of the academic process as they
understood it. Most of the members inherently believed that
Fisk's role was to educate Black students from mainly middle
class backgrounds, by increasing their human capital
endowments and to turn out a "final product" that would then
be the epitome of the Black middle class. Beyond the above,
for them Fisk University had no greater calling. The board
members who were located outside the academic process
normally adopted a managerial approach toward problem
solving, board selection, fund raising and governing the
institution. The Fisk Board's unwillingness to confront the
Leonard administration on key issues which clearly were
apparent, proved to be a most unfortunate matter which in
the long run would threaten the existence of the University.

As 1983 began and the antagonism which existed at the
institution became more profound, the struggle to save the
institution from a certain death was fought out in public
view. The president, his administration and the board were
on one side and the students, faculty and most alumni were
on the other side. Leonard's behavior which alienated even some of his closest associates at times, ultimately caused him to become an intolerable embarrassment to the Fisk Board of Trustees. In the Nashville community he had become a very visible liability, once even upstaging the Governor of Tennessee and the Mayor of Nashville at a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of a new bridge connecting North and South Nashville. Leonard therefore, in the eye of his "friends" and enemies, had to go if Fisk was to survive.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE AND RECONSTRUCT FISK

The Fisk Board of Trustees eventually did intervene in the crisis but this was done only after a campaign to save and reconstruct Fisk was launched by several faculty members, alumni, students, and community activists. The main aspect of the campaign in the first phase was public exposure of the real situation at the institution. The second phase was to be more confrontational, with the end result being, it was thought, the ousting of Leonard. Leonard's leaving was seen as the saving point for Fisk and would therefore provide an opportunity to reconstruct the University.

In January 1983, several concerned members of the "Fisk Family" including faculty members, former and current student leaders, community activists and alumni gathered on the Fisk campus to discuss the situation at the institution and what the possible outcome would be if nothing was done. From the outset, it was clear that the school was falling apart and the rise in tuition coupled with the dramatic decline in enrollment and the failure of the Leonard administration to raise any substantial amount of funds, would eventually mean the death of Fisk University.¹ The

¹The author also attended this meeting. The view described above therefore is from personal observation.
discussion immediately moved toward the question of what could and should be done to avoid the closing of the institution. As a plan of action was being developed, a number of the people gathered expressed their reservations about the potential damage negative publicity could do to the University. Nevertheless, the consensus was that the situation demanded immediate and bold action. All of this was said in the context of an understanding that if Leonard remained at Fisk another year, the institution would probably be beyond recovery anyway. Hence, the motivating factor behind the organizing effort was the survival of Fisk University. Others at the meeting attempted to place the campaign to save Fisk in the larger context of the survival of all Black colleges.2

It was understood by this committee that something had to be done for the institution even if it meant temporary closure, rather than to stand passively by and witness the destruction of Fisk University. The group constituted itself as the "Committee to Save and Reconstruct Fisk." Its members reasoned that their weapon was the truth, and that history would be their judge and jury.

They agreed upon a line of action for the committee which was as follows: In mid-February, at the winter Board Meeting, the faculty would submit its report and outline the

2The contributions of Manning Marable, Nelson Johnson and Leo Lillard were invaluable in the effort to tie what was occurring at Fisk into a larger spectrum.
said that the faculty observers had lied. The students took this opportunity to release their leaflet asserting that Fisk University not only needed new leadership but a leadership with integrity—as several of them had been present when the President had made his comments. The student leaflet also praised the faculty's stand and encouraged the student body to take a firmer stand. The student leaders' "S.O.S." (Save Our School) leaflet did not go unnoticed. The students demanded to know what was going on and what was the true situation at the institution. Shortly thereafter, with the appearance of a professionally published tabloid featuring several years of student, faculty, alumni, and several former administrators' views on the Leonard Administration, the atmosphere on campus began to deteriorate. 

Leonard reacted by ordering the campus security to collect all copies of the newspapers that were secretly distributed in every classroom and dormitory on the campus. The Administration's reaction to the tabloid and its contents stirred more interest than had been originally anticipated by the editors of the underground paper. Leonard accused the editors of the regular student newspaper, the Fisk Forum, of having printed the paper. The

4Ibid.

Fisk Forum editors denied having anything to do with the publication of the paper, even though a previously printed article by one of its editors appeared in the underground paper. However, the Forum did report the appearance of the paper on campus as a front-page story in its April 7 edition, just below its lead story entitled, "No Confidence" in reference to the Faculty's vote.6

Leonard encouraged noted Black journalist, Ethel Payne, who was on the faculty at the time, to write an article attacking the Fisk Forum editors for having reported the appearance of the "New Fisk Herald" publication. She did so, calling it "yellow journalism," and the students promptly replied with a strident response asking the journalist to address the substance of the paper's contents and to recognize that the paper's appearance was in fact the main point of discussion on the campus since they last went to press. Moreover, the appearance of the paper had been front page news in the local city paper.7 The student editors also questioned the motives of Ms. Payne. If she desired to help the Forum editors, why was such a vicious public attack launched and why did she refer to their carrying the story as "yellow journalism?" Copies of the tabloid were also sent to each member of the Board of


Trustees, selected persons in the academic community and key alumni officials.

Approximately one week after the appearance of the tabloid the Fisk faculty voted "no confidence" in the Leonard Administration. When asked to comment on the vote, Leonard said that Fisk University had over 100 faculty members and that only a minority of them had even been present to vote for the resolution. The truth of the matter was that only full time faculty members were allowed to vote. Thus, of the 53 full time faculty members, 38 voted for the motion, four voted against it, nine faculty members abstained and two were absent. Moreover, it was widely known that Fisk did not ever employ 100 faculty, even when part-time instructors were counted.

The Board of Trustees, especially the members in Nashville, saw that the situation on the campus was clearly out of hand and that the Leonard administration could not control it. Under the initiative of Charles Warfield, vice chair of the executive committee of the board and legal council to Third National Bank in Nashville, a "unity committee" was established. The stated purpose of the unity committee was to insure that open lines of

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8Ibid.
9Ibid.
communication among the constituent parts of the Fisk community could be maintained. The committee idea, which had been proposed by the faculty as early as 1981, was accepted by the Fisk community. The committee was composed of Dr. Gladys Ford, Dr. Carol Bourgh and Dr. Manning Marable representing the faculty. The student representatives were SGA president Frankie King, and two of the Fisk Forum editors, Jesse McDade and Aerie Harmon. The administration was represented by Leonard and the Dean of the University, Dr. Satcher. Once established the rules were that in order to communicate properly, everything had to be laid on the table, and to do so, confidential information would have to be discussed. Therefore, all members of the committee were to be bound to silence on such sensitive matters as the financial condition of the University. The faculty and student representatives agreed to be part of the committee in the hope that they would gain more knowledge about the true situation confronting the institution. This proved to be a tactical mistake on their part, but for the administration it was a blessing in disguise. Several of the main actors leading the opposition on campus were members of the committee. Hence, what was in effect a gag order would prevent further systematic organizing against the administration. As the school term neared a close it appeared as though Leonard once again had, with the aid of the board, escaped a certain end.
The "Save Fisk" campaign had not gone unnoticed by those on the board concerned with the institution or with their own public image. The notice of change had been issued and received. More and more critical questions were being raised not about Leonard but about the Fisk Board of Trustees and the role it was or was not playing. It was at this stage also that the board chairmanship changed hands from Thomas Kean to Timothy Donaldson, Governor of the Bank of the Bahamas and a graduate of Fisk.

Donaldson's first move was to call an emergency board meeting in July 1983, to consider the financial situation at the embattled institution and to see if the university would be able to open its doors that August. Fisk would be open, he proclaimed to the Board members, and further said that it was the Trustees that must insure that Fisk remained open. Donaldson had maintained a regular line of communication with the members of the executive committee and was therefore fully aware of the deteriorating campus situation under the Leonard administration leadership.

Money remained a large part of the institution's problem. And by September, little real change had occurred. In fact, it had been made clear at the June meeting that if more funds were not located immediately, come October, Fisk would be suffering from a severe cash flow problem, maybe

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1See Appendix B, Memorandum to the Fisk Board of Trustees, 29 June 1983.
unable to meet its faculty payroll or current operating costs and much less service its outstanding debt.

It was at this point, with the beginning of the fall semester and the onset of an early Nashville winter, that the situation at Fisk could no longer be "contained" or ignored, for it was now in the public's eye. The University was broke and the fact that Fisk students were out on street corners collecting donations to get the heat turned back on was the sad testimony to that reality. Leonard, reading the writing on the wall and knowing that once the attention subsided he could probably talk the Board out of accepting it, (as he had done before), submitted his resignation. The rationale he used to explain the resignation was that "he could not beg any longer."12 Donaldson accepted Leonard's "Thanksgiving Day" resignation on behalf of the full board. However, the matter could not be officially resolved until the February Board meeting.

In the meantime, public criticism was mounting against the Fisk Board of Trustees. Tony Brown's syndicated article was typical. He said the Fisk Trustees should quit because,

While I am an avid supporter of Black colleges, I am also in absolute opposition to any form of incompetence. In a recent article in my magazine on Black higher education, I wrote that some Black colleges, like some White colleges, suffer from incompetent leadership.

More than a year ago, in another article, I called the president of Fisk University "a bridge to the past." He responded by threatening me with legal action and accused my journalism of being responsible for the steady decline in the school's enrollment.

My negative opinion of Walter Leonard's Fisk began after a visit to the campus in 1980. At first, after having heard the allegations against the administration, I refused to believe them and accused the student leaders of having overactive imaginations. Charges included not only a police state mentality (intercepted mail and premeditated factors to precipitate the arrest of student leaders), but other unsubstantiated allegations which should not be repeated in polite company.

To even mention the Fisk of the last six years in the same breath with the Fisk of W.E.B. DuBois, the Fisk of scholarship and integrity, the training ground of some of our most prominent Blacks today and the Fisk of 112 years ago when the children of ex-slaves sang spirituals around the world to raise funds to save the school, is blasphemous—at best.

The only bright spot in all of this is Walter Leonard's resignation, but he cannot be held accountable or responsible for everything unfavorable at Fisk. Leonard is a former affirmative action officer at Harvard. Fisk's board of trustees was obviously impressed with "Harvard" and all of the White mythology it represents when choosing him to lead the school. It appears that the Fisk board got exactly what it deserved.

The inevitable conclusion is that the Fisk University Board of Trustees should also resign—en masse. Even after the 600 students were trapped in heatless dormitories and classrooms, payless paydays and the faculty had rejected Leonard's leadership, the trustees appointed him to a new role as fundraiser (Richard Pryor should incorporate this scenario into his routine.)

The trustees are ultimately responsible for Fisk. Where were they when the bills were piling up, when "Miss Fisk" and the student leaders were being abused, when a 117-year history was being
destroyed and the future of the young people in its charge were being jeopardized?

Leonard's major contribution to Black higher education was his resignation at Fisk. The trustees should also make a similar contribution.\textsuperscript{13}

The key weakness on the part of "the Committee to Save and Reconstruct Fisk" again became apparent. Here, it was the failure to anticipate the depth of the crisis that they had so well documented, and more importantly, the Committee failed to answer the questions raised in the tabloid, relative to the future of Fisk. Specifically, what kind of university should it be? Given the timing of Leonard's resignation another weakness also became clear. The focus almost solely on Leonard had allowed the principal issue to be obfuscated. The fundamental nature of the board of trustees was hardly ever seen as an issue on the campus. But perhaps the greatest strength of the committee was its ability to utilize the only weapon available to it: the truth and creative intellectual power.

The cry "Save Fisk" became a national campaign. (See President's Report in Appendix). However, the original committee to save and reconstruct Fisk had believed that its job was done and had ceased to function. As the news reports about the Fisk students collecting donations to get the heat turned on spread, the different "Fisk Clubs" around

\textsuperscript{13}Tony Brown, "Fisk Trustees Should Quit," The Cincinnati Herald, 17 December 1983, p. 5.
the country began to mobilize to solicit funds to help the institutions. The Black academic community also rallied to the aid of Fisk. WHUR, Howard University's radio station, played a key role in collecting funds for Fisk. A series of special events were held, with the proceeds going to the struggling institution. In the city of Nashville, large donations were made by some of the city's leading citizens as well as by the major local newspapers and television stations.¹⁴

Fisk needed help. The crisis of 1983 had given way to the most difficult period in the University's existence. As with all projects of substance which are in the public light, a number of individuals and organizations will be attracted to it solely for opportunistic reasons, and this was the cause with the "Save Fisk" Campaign also.¹⁵

The second semester of 1983-84 school term was a time when some decisions had to be made. The first decision was to resolve that Fisk would not be closed. This was agreed upon by all the various component parts at the institution. The second decision was to relieve Walter Leonard of all duties associated with Fisk University, immediately. That was done on February 9, 1984, the first day of the winter

¹⁴Several phoney "HELP SAVE FISK" projects were established in Nashville and other parts of the country.

¹⁵A special convocation of the entire university community was called, by Tim Donaldson, the second day of the February 1984 Board meeting, to announce the immediate departure of Leonard from the campus.
board meeting.¹⁶ Upon learning of his immediate dismissal, Leonard instructed his friend, John Harwell, the then acting Dean of Finance and Administration, to write him a check for $80,000 supposedly for remaining salary and unused vacation. Harwell did. Immediately afterwards, Leonard submitted his resignation. Board Chair Donaldson, upon learning of this, issued a stop payment order to the bank where Fisk's account was located. Leonard also called the press saying that the Fisk Board of Trustees was handing over the school to Vanderbilt, as they were trying to turn the institution into a junior college, all of which he "opposed". Amid this circus atmosphere, reports of how grants for the University had first been deposited in Leonard's personal bank account for months before being placed in the University's account, began to reach the Board. Questions even arose as to whether or not the prized art collection at Fisk had not been tampered with.¹⁷ And finally, the third decision was to seek help wherever it could be found.¹⁸ Help was sought from every quarter. The businesses and agencies the University was indebted to were asked either for additional time to pay off the debt or to have it rescheduled, or even

¹⁶Brown, "Trustees Should Quit," p. 5.
ⁱ⁷Ibid.
eliminated altogether as a [tax-deductible] contribution to the institution.

It was here that the Fisk Board of representatives approached the United States Department of Education after it was learned that some help might be forthcoming. Once approached, the Reagan administration, via the Department of Education, set up a special task force to assess the crisis and to make recommendations to the Fisk Board of Trustees as to how to put the pieces back together.\(^{19}\) This occurred at a strategic time for the Reagan/Bush administration. The administration had been accused repeatedly, by Black leaders, of being racist. Polls had even shown that most African Americans viewed the President himself as racist, and his administration as not being a friend to Black people. Hence, for the administration, Fisk was a prize catch. The thinking of Presidential strategists must have suggested that the efforts to assist the college could be viewed as a logical follow-up to the president's White House initiative on the historically black colleges and universities. Moreover, these efforts could not be cited as tokenism [by administration critics], because with regards to funding, [they argued], the Reagan administration's record of granting institutional aid to Black colleges outdistanced his Democratic predecessor, although this fact

was probably politically motivated, rather than out of any love for justice or equality of educational opportunity. The Reagan administration's budget cuts and other hostile actions toward Black colleges and civil rights issues generally proved this point.

At any rate, the United States Department of Education wasted no time in releasing a report on the situation at Fisk, wherein it suggested that it had developed a new model for rescuing small financially troubled institutions at risk, called, "the Fisk Method". There will be more investigation of this phenomena in Chapter Eight.

The unregulated intervention by the United States Government was a result of the original committee's failure to answer its own question posed to the Fisk community in the March tabloid, about the nature of the resulting institution after salvation. Moreover, the window of opportunity to create a new, independent and progressive University seemed to be closing. Now the government was directly involved and no one could be sure where this would lead.
CHAPTER EIGHT

U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FISK

A special committee created by the United States Department of Education had completed its study of financially troubled Fisk University. It concluded that the situation at Fisk "is critical enough that bold and aggressive steps must be taken immediately if the University is to survive."1 To assist in that survival, the committee prepared a series of suggested options for the University. While the Board of Trustees was still reviewing the majority of those options, it quickly accepted the suggestion that a board of advisers be established to help develop a strategic plan for Fisk. Part of the Committee's report said:

The challenges facing Fisk University are similar to the challenges facing other institutions. We believe this approach is one that many of the historically black colleges and universities should consider as a model.2

The special committee spent three days at Fisk University interviewing faculty and staff members, students, trustees and members of the Nashville community.3 The report covered 16 issues: mission; curriculum, recruitment and admissions practices; management of the Board of

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2Ibid.
A number of the most useful options presented by the task force report were adopted by the Fisk Board of Trustees. The most far-reaching options selected by the Board were the recommendations to create a special body of consultants to assist the University in the development and implementation of a five-year strategic plan. That special body came to be known as the Management Assistance Project (MAP). The Management Assistance Project's primary objective was to address the selected options set forth in the federal task force report.

According to the Management Assistance Project's plan, the board of advisors was designed primarily as a vehicle to bring external expertise to bear on the University's problems. The board of advisors was selected based on knowledge in four broad areas: mission, management, development, public and alumni affairs. Persons with broad knowledge, administrative skills, professional understanding of higher education and/or managerial expertise were recruited to be part of the board of advisors. Once constituted, a memorandum of understanding was developed to

4A Future For Fisk, 1-5.
establish the scope and authority of the advisory board relative to the Fisk Board of Trustees. This was done in consultation with the University President and the Vice-Chairman of the Fisk Board of Trustees.⁵

The project lasted for 14 months. The Management Assistance Project report argued that:

Fisk University is emerging from a time of financial turmoil and uncertainty. Prospects for the survival and growth of the University are excellent but a number of critical actions are required, particularly in the areas of mission, curriculum, recruitment, financial affairs and facilities.⁶

Against the above background, the Management Assistance Team submitted to the Fisk Board of Trustees a five-year development plan. Several of the main features of the plan included the following:

- increasing expenditures for instruction by at least 10%;
- making the area of cultural pluralism a renewed emphasis of research and teaching;
- increase the faculty-student ratio to 17:1;
- more than double annual expenditure for recruitment;
- setting an enrollment target of 1,200 students to be achieved within five years;
- placing more stress on leadership qualities when recruiting;
- increasing student retention by 50%;
- repairing and renovating the physical plant assuring compliance with government regulations;
- strengthening the membership of the trustee board;
- using plan performance as a measure for personnel performance;
- improving annual budgeting, including allocating future resources to conformity with the plan;
- improving student life activities and facilities.⁷

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⁵Ibid., 5.
⁶Ibid.
⁷Ibid.
The Fisk Board would also allow for a Council of Visitors to monitor process of the strategic plan on behalf of the Fisk Board of Advisors and the United States Department of Education (which helped recruit the Board of Advisors), and to identify and attract additional resources for plan implementation; the development of a real estate master plan for the University and the release of an abridged copy of the Fisk strategic plan for public consumption once one had been approved by the University President.8

Perhaps the central link of the Management Assistance Project strategic plan and the relationship between Fisk University, its board of trustees, the United States Department of Education and the Board of Advisors is the so-called "Fisk Method." The Management Assistance Project overview describes the Fisk Method in the following manner:

In March 1984, the Department of Education was approached to assist Fisk University when its inability to pay off a utility debt sparked national media reports on a financial condition [that] had been deteriorating for ten years. Rather than respond in the traditional manner and simply dispatch tax money, the Department combined a belief that bad management wastes money and good management attracts it with an abiding faith that private sector solutions to problems can often be more effective and less costly than purely governmental ones. This has lead to a series of responses that collectively can be described as the Fisk Method for the resurgence of a higher educational institution at risk.9

8Ibid., 5-6.

9Ibid., 5.

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The authors of the plan proceeded to outline the three identified pre-requisites for implementing the Fisk Method: strong leadership, a university-wide commitment to change, and a body of loyal and resourceful supporters.\textsuperscript{10} The essence of the Fisk Method is the above pre-requisites and a three phased approach to: 1) identifying institutional options for action (Phase I); 2) addressing immediate problems and future needs (Phase II); and 3) implementing and monitoring the strategic plan (Phase III).\textsuperscript{11}

Phase I of the method consists of the recruitment of private and public sector persons with professional skills in management and education to undertake a two- to three-month assessment of the college or university. The transforming of available studies, on-site interviews and professional judgments and experience, into a unified body of options for the university or college to consider.\textsuperscript{12} Included in this phase is a recommendation that existing campus expertise be supplemented in the form of an advisory board to the board of trustees to work with the options. Phase II consisted of the recruitment of a distinguished advisory board of private and public sector persons, to undertake a one-year management assistance project to address, in cooperation with an institution's chief

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., Section X, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
executive officer, short-term actions on urgent problems and long-range strategies for comprehensive solutions.

The recruitment of resourceful and dedicated professionals to serve as volunteer consultants on the project then takes place and the various strategies are melded together into a corporate-style five year strategic plan.

Phase III consisted of the recruitment of a council of visitors to monitor progress and time certain objectives in the plan on behalf of the board of trustees. The council of visitors would provide incentives for plan performance, and where appropriate, recruit additional resources for plan implementation.13

Although the strategic plan admits that no claim is made that the Fisk Method is perfect or that it will work for all "institutions at risk", it is argued that there is sufficient evidence now to suggest that the Fisk Method holds genuine promise for "institutions at risk"; that it is a useful alternative to inaction; and that even growing institutions should find most, if not all, of its aspects of interest.14

Finally, the authors argue that in a period when reliance on government solutions is becoming more problematic, "the Fisk Method of self-help and resurgence"

13Ibid.

is timely and merits consideration. For the purpose of this present study, perhaps the best way to consider the merits or lack thereof of the Fisk Method, is to "return to the source" to examine the resurgence process at Fisk University.
CHAPTER NINE
FISK UNIVERSITY AND THE FISK METHOD

The Fisk Method as applied at Fisk University, was being promoted in the United States educational community as a national demonstration project on the use of private sector resources to assist in the resurgence of an "institution at risk." A number of articles appeared which placed Fisk in a positive light, in an effort to bolster public confidence and to rebuild a dynamic image.¹

As pointed out earlier, Fisk University has been a liberal arts institution for over 120 years. Its continuation as a liberal arts institution was not necessarily jeopardized by the implementation of the Management Assistance Project's strategic plan. In fact, one of the main features of the plan was the creation of a fine arts research center, similar to what C. Eric Lincoln had argued for years earlier. However, two interrelated areas that could endanger the existence and maintenance of Fisk University, as a Black university, were adopted by the Fisk Board of Trustees. The two areas were 1) the redefining of the mission of the institution and 2) the

development of a course curriculum that would reflect that redefined mission.²

In the area of mission, the plan asserts, in agreement with the federal task force, that "the mission statement of Fisk University" did not speak clearly enough to the need that Fisk should exist to serve.³ The report states,

When Fisk was one of only a few places a serious Black student could gain a quality education, Fisk's role was clear...with the desegregation of higher education, the project believes it is time for Fisk to be more precise about who it hopes to attract and educate and why.⁴

The mission of the institution was one of the key areas suggested to be changed in a "radical way." The mission team identified the current mission and assessed its past performance. The team stated

Where the performance of Fisk's mission statement has been questioned is in its current appropriateness given a dramatically changed recruiting environment since 1966, marked principally by competition from predominately white schools. When a Black student generally can go anywhere he or she chooses, if he or she qualifies academically, what becomes the purpose of a predominately Black college? Why should a Black or any other type of student go to Fisk?⁵

From the posing of those questions based on the previously described view of the American educational reality, the mission team concluded that there were three main weaknesses

²A Future For Fisk, Section E, 5.
³Ibid., Section E, 4.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
of the Fisk mission and hence the mission of the institution needed to be "modified." The three weaknesses were as follows:

a. Does not speak clearly enough to the need that Fisk should address and so provides no clear guidance as to the type of liberal arts education the institution should provide

b. Does not identify sufficiently what type of student should consider coming to Fisk and as a result provides no clear guidance to whom to recruit and admit

c. The lack of specificity about need or market does not facilitate a useful evaluation now or in the future as to whether the University is indeed meeting its mission.\textsuperscript{6}

The modification of the Fisk mission was based on two issues. First, according to the mission team, the mission should lend itself to a statement of "measurement, marketing, and curriculum development." Second, an approach must be adopted to strengthen the university's statement of need and mission generally. The report continues this line of thinking and suggests that there is a need for a university to train future Black and other leaders for a culturally diverse society. Hence, a model "new" mission statement is offered by the project which suggests that the primary purpose of Fisk should be to attract and train future leaders and provide them with a quality liberal arts education.

In addition, the project report stated:

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 5.
Mission themes of leadership and pluralism would be emphasized in Fisk's recruitment, its traditional curriculum, and in a proposed interdisciplinary program focused on pluralism research and teaching.  

It is quite clear that the project, which was chaired by graduates from Vanderbilt and Carnegie-Mellon Universities, believed that a closer relationship between mission and course offerings centered around pluralism. Therefore, the mission statement offered by the project read in part:

The mission of Fisk University is to provide liberal arts education of the highest quality. The ultimate goal is to prepare students to be skilled, resourceful, and imaginative leaders who will address effectively the challenges of life in a technological society, a pluralist nation, and a multi-cultural world.  

The rationale for such a mission statement was based on the project's view that the opportunities for leaders from all ethnic segments of America are increasing and therefore a need exists for excellent leaders among all peoples. Those leaders need to be skilled, possessed of knowledge, vision and values enabling them to work effectively with others for the ultimate benefit of all humanity. Moreover, it was argued:

Because America is a land of ethnic pluralism, our nation is enriched by the presence of the many excellent colleges and universities that maintain freedom of access while assuring the preservations  

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 6.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 7.}
of the heritage of particular religious and ethnic groups.

Historically Black colleges remain among the best examples of such schools. These institutions offer proportionately more opportunities for Blacks to assume leadership roles during their years of study. Also, these Black institutions provide environments that graduate more Black students, with baccalaureate degrees, in less time, and send more of them forward to distinguished graduate and professional schools, and later hold positions of high responsibility throughout society, than predominately White colleges and universities. Among historically, Black institutions, Fisk holds an honored position.9

The above statement reflects some noteworthy thinking on the rationale for the continued survival of the historically Black colleges and universities. However, one wonders what is meant by "ethnic pluralism" in the context of United States society, and why Fisk University should utilize that concept as the central focus of its mission.

According to the Management Assistance team, throughout its history, Fisk's basic strategy on its mission statement did not specify that the mission was to provide a quality liberal arts education for Blacks, but left unspecified (but assumed) whom the institution exists to serve. At the same time, the team acknowledged the 1984 catalogue section on historical background that clearly states:

While the University has from the earliest days exhibited a basic concern with the problems and needs of Black America, it has clearly and proudly proclaimed and supported two principles—which are the policy of non-racial discrimination and the

9Ibid., 6.

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measurement of Fisk by the highest standard of American education.\textsuperscript{10}

The Fisk University Fact Book of 1981, also suggests the following:

Today, Fisk continues to assist young men and women of ability and promise to develop the positive and productive self-image which can help them to raise above the barriers that custom still puts in the way of their legitimate aspirations. We believe, a liberal arts college, catering to the unique needs of Black students of talent is as vital today as it has been at any time in the history of higher education. Black men and women still encounter racially motivated obstacles to achievement and recognition despite their increased entry into the labor force. More importantly, society has trained Black men and women from childhood to accept a limited set of options and restricted level of aspiration. Providing a setting in which these more subtle constraints may be overcome is one of the major missions of the historically Black colleges...Fisk has asked, and will continue to ask, questions that large state-funded schools and scholars tend to neglect or overlook.\textsuperscript{11}

In spite of the above mission objectives of which one Fisk faculty member, said, "it's just fine the way it is," when asked about the mission by the Management Assistance Team, the proposed modification of the mission was recommended and accepted. This change was suggested because in the opinion of the advising team, a "clearer" idea of whom it (Fisk) seeks to educate and why was needed. The team further argued that Fisk should recruit more aggressively, additional white and other "non-Black"

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
students and that the curriculum should address the increasing technological nature of society.

The Management Assistance Project concludes the mission section of its report by saying,

more than any other idea that has emerged during the Management Assistance Project, the concept of establishing Fisk as a research and teaching leader on American pluralism stands out as having the best ability to distinguish Fisk...in this country as well as internationally... The American experience has important implications as a useful model for racial and religious conflict resolution.\textsuperscript{12}

The notion of pluralism has been promoted historically with regard to competing interests among different groups. In the United States, pluralism is usually associated with the concepts of democracy and the "melting pot" theory. While it is certainly true that the United States, is one of the most culturally diverse nations, it is equally true that the dominant culture of White America "tolerates" other cultural traditions exhibited by national minority groups. Many times however, this tolerance extends only to such matters as using chopsticks, rather than a fork, in an Asian restaurant, and hardly ever includes equality and informed understanding or real appreciation of the cultural traditions of others. In addition, when "cultural pluralism" is argued for, the usual result is the absorption and distortion of many cultural traditions, and that is not pluralism. The recent negative, almost violent, reaction to

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
the call for a genuine multi-cultural curriculum is a case in point of how the dominant culture responds to such objectives. For African Americans especially, given the different interpretations on how successful the "desegregation" process in education has been, it would seem that a careful approach to such a concept would be in order, especially if they are to be used by the United States, society "to promote American pluralism internationally."

Besides, any critical review of America's effort towards pluralism would undoubtedly show that it has been fought against and resisted in the meanest manner, on the basis of what Dr. King referred to as the "fantasy of racial harmony."¹³

The current situation and developments at Fisk have remained complex. As a result, a clear reading of exactly what is taking place at the institution is somewhat elusive. However, several informed faculty and students have confirmed reports which have suggested that the new administration is just a more sophisticated version of the Leonard administration.

As described by the present Executive Vice-President George Neely, to the Southern Education Foundation, the conditions existing at Fisk University were the result of years of problems in virtually every component of the

¹³Martin Luther King, Jr., "Racism and the White Blacklash" in Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos Or Community? (Boston: Beacon Press 1967), 67-101.
University. Neely outlined seven important challenges confronting the Ponder administration upon its arrival at the university.

1. **A debt in excess of $4 million.** This debt was simply the result of too many years of spending more than was taken in; it was the convergence of inadequate cost control measures and ineffective fundraising.

2. **A decaying physical plant.** The plant reflected serious decay as the result of more than two decades of deferred maintenance. For over eight years, virtually zero dollars had gone toward preventive maintenance or repair.

3. **A declining enrollment.** Enrollment had declined continuously from over 1400 in 1977-78 to less than 600 in 1984-85, due primarily to: (a) an abrupt and drastic increase in tuition, which more than doubled over a three-year period; (b) a rapidly decaying quality in student life activities during that same period of increasing tuition; and (c) a staff too insensitive to needs of students.

4. **A well trained, but highly demoralized faculty.** Despite an average tenure of service of over 17 years and 65 percent with the earned doctorate, this faculty had: (a) suffered a 20 percent abatement in salary in 1974-75, which was only restored to 1973-74 levels in 1977-78; (b) received only a 2.5 percent raise in salary between 1977-78 and 1983-84, despite the fact that annual inflation during this period was double-digit; and (c) witnessed more than 50 percent reduction in instructional cost over a 10-year period.

5. **Administrative over-staffing.** The administrative staff had become too large, too unproductive, and too burdened with "cronyism."

6. **Financial probation.** The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools placed Fisk on financial probation in 1984, citing
financial conditions which could potentially affect the quality of the institution's academic program.

7. An indifferent alumni. The support of its alumni that Fisk had enjoyed for years was waning...and assistance to Fisk came from such unlikely quarters as entertainers like Bill Cosby and Michael Jackson.14

According to Neely, by 1985, operating expenses had been cut almost in half, from more than $11 million to approximately $6 million.15 But this cutting of expenses and eliminating the long outstanding debts was achieved primarily by the introduction of an austerity program that had many people still complaining about cold dormitories and classrooms, limited supplies, including chalk and erasers, and the continued deterioration of an ailing physical plant.16

Moreover, new charges of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement abounded. For instance, the wife of President Ponder was appointed head of the Business Department, when her academic background was in education and his nephew was placed in the financial aid office where charges of sexual harassment for financial aid were leveled by female students. The subsequent indictment for embezzlement of two


15Ibid.

16Ibid.
Fisk financial aid officers and a former Fisk student, show clearly that something was amiss. According to THE TENNESSEAN the former director of financial aid, Benjamin Cooper and the assistant director, Carlos Romando were named in a 13-count indictment charging them with conspiracy and embezzlement in 1986 and 1987. The indictment stated, students who were expecting student loans or who applied for loans under the Guaranteed Student Loan Program, were told by Cooper, Clark and Kennedy that a new program started which allowed students to keep some of their loan money. The three men also told the students that if they chose to keep part of their money, a representative from the financial aid office would help them cash the loan check. After cashing the check, the student was told that he could keep one hundred to five hundred dollars of it for his own use. The student was then advised to put the rest into his account. Instead of the loan money being credited to the account, Cooper, Clark and Kennedy would take the student's money and split it among themselves. The indictment also stated that at times, students were told to stop by the financial aid office to sign their loan checks and deposit them into their account. Instead of putting the money into the account, Cooper would keep the money for himself and his associates.17

More recently, a White administrator was appointed as Academic Dean of the historically Black college causing students to question the administration's commitment to Black heritage.

The meaning of these hurried changes are not yet clear, but it does suggest the orientation of the Ponder administration, in the light of the availability of many outstanding Black administrators. In addition, Ponder has

made it no secret that he is a Black Republican who shares many of the ideological predispositions of the Reagan/Bush administrations, as the choice of commencement speakers during his tenure further illustrates.

Fisk student enrollment did begin to increase. In fact, it increased by approximately 18% between 1986 and 1988. Some critics have argued that such increases at historically Black colleges have had more to do with decreasing attendance at predominately white colleges by Black students, and also because of the increasingly hostile racial atmosphere at predominately white institutions.

Whether or not the ends have justified the means is open to debate. What is clear is that the institution continues to suffer from an internal crisis precipitated by the lack of strong accountability by the Board of Trustees. One can conclude that the Fisk Method has some lofty objectives, it is more akin to an International Monetary Fund Structural Adjustment Program, which proposes initial shock treatment as a solution to long term neglect, unworkable management strategies and simple logic. Hence, from the perspective of the current status and need of African American higher education, one can conclude that the Fisk method and its usefulness as a model is, at best, questionable.
The crisis of Black higher education in the United States is part and parcel of the overall educational crisis in the society. However, the implications of allowing this crisis to continue without a radical critique and challenge, cannot be adequately measured. What is clear, based on present trends, is that the possibility of young African Americans obtaining a higher education will decrease significantly in the coming years. And this will occur at a time when all projections for the future job markets reflect the view that the worker of the 21st century will require a more developed form of education than previous generations of workers. One of the major challenges confronting the historically Black colleges and universities is to examine and concretely define ways in which the relationship between education and employment can be strengthened without the "business mentality" completely changing the purpose of the educational process.

A second crucially important challenge confronting historically Black colleges and universities is the question of administrative and board leadership, along with faculty development and recruitment. It is at the faculty level
that probably the single most important function in developing an institution that will serve the educational needs of the Black population must take place. We speak here of the pedagogical content, that all instruction should be based on an orientation of the institution to serve the needs of the community and that this must be the motivating force for its existence. In this regard, students are and will be the key factor. Given that in its simplest form the educational process should concern itself with educating the uneducated, there should never be the view that qualified students do not exist. The one quality that needs to be possessed by students is the desire to be educated and an ability to learn. Fisk's beginnings clearly show that this is possible.

Our analysis of Fisk University has shown that Fisk is a classic example of how the internal contradictions of a given institution or community, if mishandled, can allow the external forces to operate more effectively. It is clear that the Fisk Method is, in reality, a modified austerity project designed to lessen the expected assistance from the government to educational institutions, especially the Black colleges, facing problems. The reality of a Fisk University that is almost as bad as the one under the Leonard administration testifies to the use of the Fisk Method. Yes, bills are being paid, but at the expense of destroying the soul of the institution through the
maintenance of an alienated campus environment where simple items such as chalk and erasers are rare commodities.

The Fisk Board of Trustees' view of a "contemporary education" and of the educational mission of a Black college was contrary to the conjunctural and strategic educational needs of the African American population in general, and the student-youth sector in particular. Additionally, the adoption of an applied "American business mentality" for an institution such as Fisk, led many on the Board and in the administration to miss the essence of the educational process. An institution's central meaning or logic of existence within the educational process ought to be the development of each student to their fullest potential. Instead, the idea of turning out the "final product" or a "more marketable product," and improving upon one's "human capital" is what existed at Fisk University, and what was part of the ideological struggle surrounding the crisis.

The paradoxical end of this development, with respect to Fisk, is that while the Board viewed students as a business proposition, the administration was allowed the largesse of fiscal and operational excess. The usual explanation, when pointed out that a business light needed to be shone on the administration as well, was the view that "...after all, this is an educational institution, a Black college...," as if this excused everything.
The educational needs of African Americans today demand that the realities of the world be made known to Black youth. A new university has to be born. Fisk University had and still has the potential to become the new university. However, if this is ever to become a reality the transformation of the Fisk Board of Trustees must occur.

With respect to the future operations of the university, the institution's mission does not need to be redefined but updated based on the original views of the founders, in keeping with the present realities and educational needs of the African American people. In short, the mission must be internalized and linked organically with the people's struggle for equality and social justice in the United States.

Indeed, a new Fisk would have to be developed, one wherein the ideal of progressive social change and self-determination are the twin pillars of the educational process. The possibility exists that the reconstruction of something needed and demanded by the conditions of the present era, might be realized with some hard work and sacrifice on the part of those few dedicated and committed to the future. The view that Fisk or other Black institutions must continue to knock on white doors to get green money so that Black people can be educated must be critically re-evaluated. Certainly, white coffers should offer support to Black colleges and universities, however,
if these institutions are to ever obtain true self-
determination, they must be supported by African American
people and run by persons who are not alienated from the
realities of the Black community in the United States.
Moreover, one of the primary tasks of a "free" educational
institution would be to undertake a critical analysis of the
entire bankrupt American educational system.

The foregoing analysis suggests that the role of
historically Black colleges and universities is of great
significance in trying to meet the educational needs of
African Americans in a changing society. It shows too that
the institutions of higher learning are central in promoting
the facts of the reality of Black life and culture in
America, thereby making it clear that the predicament of
African Americans is not an aberration of the system, but
rather a necessary part of the system. Hence, our approach
to the reality faced has to understand this point of view.
If such a view is ignored, then the proposed intervention
strategies will merely end in, or at best lead to, more
tragic errors. What then does this really mean for
historically Black colleges and universities, and African
American education generally?

It basically means that those involved in the
educational enterprise, the truth seekers, as Dr. DuBois
called them, have to struggle from the vantage point that
Black youth can and must learn; that they confront an
increasingly racist, sexist and class-oriented society which seeks to continue the reproduction of unequal social relations built upon the foundation of class privilege. Therefore, an understanding that a need exists to fight for progressive social change has to be one of the clearest themes transmitted to students attending these institutions. Practical activities ought also to be provided for those truly committed to learning and gaining necessary experiences which might better prepare them to serve as they lead.

The American social order as it is presently constituted is unjust and is in the midst of one of the deepest crises it has ever faced. In order to maintain the status quo, it does not need nor does it intend to allow any effective opposition or prophetic voices to exist. Therefore, changes that impact negatively upon the poor and oppressed are inevitable. In fact, the conditions may become more likened to genocide. The challenge of the historically Black colleges and universities and African American education in the final analysis, is to provide the tools and skills to that community's youth, which will enable them to have the ability to compete in an advanced technological society, to defend their cultural traditions and to stand up for their rights and those of oppressed people worldwide. If Dr. DuBois was correct, then the
historically Black colleges and universities have but one real mission and that is "to teach the truth."

Marable has suggested,

The challenge of saving Black higher education is a two-fold process. Politically, the right to preserve all-black institutions means that pressure must be exerted on the federal government to increase support to these colleges...to maintain a Fisk University or an Atlanta University as an all-Black center for scholarship in no way contradicts the demand for a desegregated, pluralist society. For the foreseeable future, white institutions will employ every means, legal and otherwise, to reduce the number of Black faculty, staff and students at their institutions. Thus the effort to maintain Black colleges in essence is the attempt to guarantee Blacks access to higher education. Second, the pursuit of genuine democracy and a Black pedagogy for liberation must be fought for within these universities, and any effort waged by Black students toward this end must also be supported.¹

The role that institutions such as Fisk can and must occupy in the quest for self-determination must be carefully analyzed. However, if the university were able to live up to its 1983 statement of purpose, Fisk could make a very large contribution.

On the other hand, if the Black colleges, such as Fisk, only function to serve the interests of one sector of the African American community, "who in their haste to become Americans, their desire not to be peculiar or segregated in mind or body, [they] try to escape their cultural heritage and the body of experience which they themselves have built

¹Marable, Quiet Death, 39.
up,″2 then as Dr. DuBois has asserted, other social organs must replace the college in this function of rooting itself in the group life, and afterwards apply that knowledge and culture to actual living.3

One may still be left with the question, is there a continuing need or place for historically Black colleges and universities such as Fisk? Dr. DuBois also best answered this question when he argued the following:

We American Negroes are not simply Americans, or simply Negroes. We form a minority group in a great, vast conglomerated land and a minority group which by reason of its efforts during the last two generations has made extraordinary and gratifying progress. But in the making of this progress, in the working together of people belonging to this group, in the pattern of thinking which they have had to follow and the memories which they shared, they have built up a distinct and unique culture, a body of habit, thought and adjustment which they cannot escape because it is in the marrow of their bones and which they ought not to ignore because it is the only path to a successful future.

What is a culture? It is a careful knowledge of the past out of which the group as such has emerged: in our case a knowledge of African history and social development — one of the richest and most intriguing which the world has known. Our history in America, north, south and Caribbean, has been an extraordinary one which we must know to understand ourselves and our world. The experience through which our ancestors have gone for four hundred years is part of our bone and sinew whether we know it or not. The methods which we evolved for opposing slavery and fighting prejudice are not to be forgotten, but learned for


3DuBois, Field and Function, 96.
our own and others' instruction. We must understand the differences in social problems between Africa, the West Indies, South and Central America, not only among the Negroes but those affecting Indians and other minority groups. Plans for the future of our group must be built on a base of our problems, our dreams and frustrations; they cannot stem from empty air or be successfully based on the experiences of others alone. The problem of our children is distinctive: when shall a colored child learn of the color line? At home, at school or suddenly on the street? What shall we do in art and literature? Shall we seek to ignore our background and graft ourselves on a culture which does not wholly admit us, or build anew on that marvelous African art heritage, one of the world's greatest as all critics now admit? Whence shall our drama come, from ourselves today or from Shakespeare in the English seventeenth century?

For these and analogous reasons, I am convinced that there is a place and a continuing function for the small Negro college.  

The struggle for African American education within the American social order demands that a clear sense of mission be shared by those charged with administering the black colleges and universities.

For African Americans a renewed focus on the historical memory of the existence of great universities in Africa prior the institution of transatlantic slave trade and slavery in the United States, the subsequent denial of equal educational opportunities because of jim crow segregation, and the continued attacks on those promoting quality education in a democratic society, could provide the foundation for a collective sense of historical mission.

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4DuBois, *Function of the Private Negro College*, 143.
Moreover, the knowledge that throughout those periods that the thirst for knowledge was a central demand, that if won, could help to attain full freedom in the society further places a special emphasis on the role of education in the struggle.

Thus, while it is true that the African American struggle for education in the American social order today clearly means fighting to save historically black colleges and universities, it also means that those institutions must change. The trajectory of their change however, has to be determined with the basic interest and future needs of the African American community in mind.

The 21st century will present United States society with many complex challenges, some of which are hardly conceivable just now. However, all trends currently indicate that the rapid transformation and use of information technology will continue. Most observers agree that this could either help close the educational gap between social groups or widen it. Therefore, access to the new technology and other scientific and cultural achievements of the day is a fundamental human right. If it is true that tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today, then the existence of the historically black colleges could guarantee that African Americans are not marginalized out of existence because of a lack of knowledge or skills. Education has to be seen as a right and not a privilege.
A REPORT TO
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM
THE FACULTY ASSEMBLY

FISK UNIVERSITY
MAY 14, 1981
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A. On the question of credit for the reading and writing laboratory:

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4. Memo from Dr. Clift to Acting Dean Jones, September 4, 1980.
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7. Letter from Dean Harwell to Mrs. Bumbulis, October 29, 1980.
8. Memo from Mrs. Bumbulis to Dean Harwell, October 27, 1980.
9. Memo from Acting Dean Jones to Mr. Hunter, August 12, 1980.
10. Letter from Mr. Hunter to Acting Dean Jones, July 31, 1980.
11. Memo from Acting Dean Jones to Mr. Hunter, July 28, 1980.
12. Letter from Mr. Hunter to Acting Dean Jones, July 11, 1980.
The Faculty Assembly herewith presents its report to the Board of Trustees at the close of the 1980-81 academic year. The following material is divided into three sections: Procedure and Communication, Enrollment at the University, and Faculty Achievements. An appendix containing supporting documents is attached.

I. Procedure and Communication

The Assembly is pleased to report that one problem appears to have been resolved. The faculty has brought to the attention of the Board at its October, 1980 meeting, a recent, innovative practice of the administration with regard to decisions and notification of decisions of non-reappointment. The President affirmed the University's commitment to follow the guidelines of AAUP, and we applaud the administration for changing its practice of the past two years (1978-79 and 1979-80) so that the process of decision making and notification is now in conformity with AAUP guidelines. However, certain other problems remain.

The Faculty Assembly is very concerned about the poor communication between the administration and the faculty. In recent years the administration's failure to respond to actions and requests of the faculty has established a pattern of non-cooperation which has impaired the orderly functioning of the University and has contributed to low morale among the faculty.

In a number of crucial issues the administration has not responded to actions of the Faculty Assembly according to the procedure outlined in the Governance Document (II; III, B, 2 and 3). Two important cases are the matter of academic credit for the basic skills laboratory and the still unresolved status of the Faculty Handbook. The question of credit for the basic skills laboratory dates from May 8, 1979, when the Chairperson of the Assembly reported in writing to the President that the Assembly had approved the granting of credit for work in the Writing Laboratory. The Assembly received no written response from the Office of the President, and during the 1979-80 academic year the University granted academic credit to students enrolled in the Reading and Writing Laboratories. However, in a memo dated July 8, 1980, the Acting Dean of the University reversed past practice by ruling that academic credit would not be given for work in the Reading and Writing Laboratories. The administration has not responded to the Assembly Chairperson's letter of April 10, 1981 on this matter. This unresolved process continues to undermine both the procedure outlined in the Governance Document and the faculty's role in decision making on academic matters.
The Faculty Assembly requests that the Board urge the administration to cooperate with the Faculty Assembly in reaching an agreement on the matter of credit for the basic skills laboratories in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Governance Document.

The matter of the Faculty Handbook remains unresolved. Little progress has been made since the Assembly reported to the Board in its memorandum of October 1, 1980. The administration has still not provided the Assembly with a response to the September, 1979 draft of the Handbook indicating areas of agreement and proposed changes in language. The Faculty Welfare Committee has been meeting with representatives of the administration on the Handbook, but the administration's failure to provide the Assembly with the material it requested in its letter of September 4, 1980 hinders progress on this matter and leaves the policies and procedures of the University in doubt.

The Faculty Assembly requests the Board to direct the administration to respond to the Faculty Assembly's request of September 4, 1980, so that the task of coming to agreement between administration and faculty may be expedited.

A third area of concern is the administration's failure to respond to the Assembly's request for the administration's recommendations on the matter of governance. After the October, 1980 Board Meeting, the Faculty Assembly drafted and approved its recommendations on University governance and sent them to the administration and to the Board of Trustees. At the February Board Meeting several faculty members heard that the administration had also formulated recommendations of governance. The administration did not send its proposals to the Assembly and has not responded to the Assembly's request of April 17, 1981 for a copy.

The Faculty Assembly requests that the Board take no action on changes in the Governance Document until the faculty has the opportunity to review and comment on changes proposed by the administration.

The fourth area of concern is the administration's refusal to provide written reasons to faculty members denied promotion or tenure. This refusal violates the policy stated in both the Assembly's and the administration's drafts of the Faculty Handbook. One faculty member filed a grievance on this issue. The Faculty Welfare Committee, acting as the Faculty Grievance Committee, has urged the administration to provide reasons in writing for the denial
of tenure. This refusal is particularly grave in that it undermines the University's commitment to AAUP guidelines.

The Faculty Assembly requests that the Board direct the President to give reasons in writing for denial of promotion and tenure when requested.

A final matter of concern to the faculty is the administration's recent refusal to provide the University Organist with a key to the chapel since the locks on the chapel doors were changed in the summer of 1980. Since June, 1980, the University Organist, the Music Department, and the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts have all written letters to the administration requesting that a key to the chapel be given to the University Organist, but no satisfactory action has been forthcoming. The Assembly is concerned about this unresolved matter imposes unnecessary constraints on the Music Department's academic program and deprives students of convenient access to the organ. Furthermore, the continued irregular use of the organ and the University Organist's inability to perform necessary daily upkeep on the organ (which he has provided since 1969) may result in deterioration of the organ and thus lead to unnecessary financial burden to the University.

The Faculty Assembly requests that the Board urge the administration to provide the University Organist with a key to the chapel.

II. Enrollment at Fisk

The faculty is frankly worried about the precipitous drop in the size of the student body. We wish to comment on some enrollment figures in recent years.

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<th>Fisk Student Enrollment</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Fall semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>1125</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>1157</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>1104</td>
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<td>1980-81</td>
<td>1009</td>
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While it is impossible to identify any trend, we would comment on the 12.8% drop from a high of 1157 in the fall, 1978, to a low of 1009 in the fall, 1980. Moreover, we would emphasize an even sharper decline from a high of 1093 in the spring, 1978, to a low of 901 in the spring, 1981, a decline of 17.56%.

All these figures since 1977-1978 are much lower than the average enrollment in the preceding five years which was
1473 for the fall and 1399 for the spring (Source, Mission and Management: A Non-Traditional Self-Study of Fisk University, Part III, Academic Programs, Table 13, p. 60, 1978).

In 1978-1979, there was a large difference in enrollment for the fall and spring semesters, the 109 decrease representing a decline of 9.4%. Dean Harper has reported in January, 1979, that about half of the 255 students of academic probation as a result of the first semester, 1978-1979, were freshmen. That meant that over one-third of the class of '82 (N=362) were at that time on academic probation (Minutes, Fisk Faculty Assembly, January 25, 1979, n. 163). As a result of the Assembly discussion a committee was set up to consider admissions policies, and recommendations were made by the faculty at meetings of the Assembly on April 5, April 19 and May 11, 1979.

In 1979-1980, the fall enrollment was smaller (N=1104) than in the previous years (N=1157), but the decrease could be attributed to a stricter review of applications, resulting in a 63% acceptance rate in 1979 as compared to a rate of 78% in 1978. "As a result, the Class of 1983 is one of the finest ever" (1980 President's Report, p. 12). The fact that there were 44 fewer students in the spring than in the fall, a drop of 3.98% seemed to fall within a normal range.

In planning for 1980-1981, the anticipated enrollment was assumed to be 1150 students. It was assumed by the President in his 1980 Report (p. 2). It was assumed in the construction of the budget (First Follow-up Report for the Institutional Self-Study Program For Fisk University, September 1, 1980, p. 6). According to the Follow-Up Report, the strategy for improving the financing at Fisk was based on a reduction of the University's dependence on external funding by generating income over which it would have greater control (p. 2). The claim was that the enrollment had become stable at approximately 1100 students which is verified by the data for 1977 through 1979, but the figure is much lower than the average for 1972 to 1977. It was proposed that "in developing the 1980-1981 budget, the University use(d) tuition and fees as the 'plug' factor in the revenue budget" (p. 5). That means that "after the expenditure budget had been set and revenues from the government, private gifts and grants, and investments had been realistically determined on a conservative basis, the level of tuition and fees was set to meet our financing objectives" (p. 5).

For the academic year 1980-1981, the tuition was set at $3750, up from $2650, a 41.5% increase; the fees at $300, up
from $200, a 50% increase; room charges at $1200, up from $1000, a 20% increase; and board at $735, up from $635, a 15.7% increase. The total package went from $4485 to $5985, a 33.4% increase. There are rumors of additional increases for 1981-1982.

The dramatic drop in the enrollment figure for the fall of 1980, a 12.8% decrease in comparison 1978, and an 8.6% decrease in comparison to 1979, may well be attributed to the increased costs for a Fisk education. Such an opinion is confirmed by comparing the size of the freshman class in recent years: the freshman and new students were respectively in 1978, 360 and 460; in 179, 342 and 430, and in 1980, 267 and 330. This represents a 25.8% decrease in the number of freshmen 1980 in comparison with the enrollees in 1978; and a 21.5% decrease in the size of the freshman class of 1980 in comparison with 1979.

Whereas the President's 1980 Report (pp. 12-13) heralded both the size and the quality of the freshmen classes in 1978 (class of '82) and 1979 (class of '83), the faculty is worried about the rather small freshmen class in 1980 (class of '84). While the faculty is determined to assist all students to graduate from the University, the usual number of graduates has been 50 to 60% of those who began as freshmen.

In addition, the faculty is concerned about the attrition in the classes of '82 and '83, those who are next year's seniors and juniors. It is not enough to attribute the current smaller size of the student body to increased fees and to improved standards of admission. The faculty recognizes other factors. Last spring, during the controversy over greater security for the dormitories, the faculty disagreed (Minutes, Fisk University Faculty Assembly Meeting n. 29, March 27, 1980) with the administrations's handling of the matter, an excessively hang tough posture which was a cause for some upperclassmen deciding to complete their college studies at another institution. Moreover, during the current academic year (1980-1981), Acting Dean Jones' heavy-handed dealings with students and faculty have contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty about rules, regulations, requirements and procedures. Many upperclassmen have expressed their desire to go elsewhere. A particular problem area has been in the Department of Economics and Management which has the largest number of majors in the University. The unstable situation of the faculty and the absence of a permanent full-time member of that faculty have had a destabilizing effect on the students.
Some faculty members have reported an unusually small number of students who went through the procedures of pre-registration for the fall term (1981). Others have reported remarks from students about the physical facilities, both the poor conditions in the dorms and the unattractive situation of some classrooms outside of Park-Johnson Hall. Individual faculty members have learned from students that the rise in tuition and the cutbacks in loans have made them think of leaving. In conversations with faculty, students have complained about administrative decisions and about the rigidity and excessive red tape in the administration. They have also expressed the sentiment that they have no voice in the university, that there is the absence of an atmosphere of trust and a general feeling that "things aren't together."

The faculty brings these matters to the Board because we think there is a crisis that must be addressed. The crisis stems from a combination of factors – increased fees, a posture of the administration that strikes students and faculty as unnecessarily rigid and at times cruel, an isolation of the administration from both faculty and students, one that has grown wider and deeper during the past twelve months. The faculty is unhappy about the leadership in the University. It cannot be silent as the student body grows dangerously small.

The Assembly recognizes that demographic changes and an uncertain political and economic climate are beyond the control of the University. It is therefore all the more important that the university identify and correct any problems that are within its control. In view of its effect on enrollment, the Faculty Assembly questions the wisdom of continued use of tuition and fees as a 'plug' factor in the revenue budget. For the same reason, the Assembly requests that the Board immediately establish a committee consisting of Board members, administrators, faculty, and students to look into the causes of declining enrollments and to suggest possible remedies.

III. Faculty Achievements

In 1980-1981, the Fisk faculty has continued to demonstrate its scholarship and creativity through lectures, publications, and research. While the number of scholarly papers, monographs, articles and other research publications is impressive, only a sampling is given below.

In the Natural Science Division, Dr. I. Wesley Elliott's paper, "Synthesis of Oxygen Analogues of Isoquinoline Alkaloids," was published in Proceedings of the
National Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. Also, Dr. Elliott together with Fisk senior Beverly Strawder presented a paper, "New Synthetic Approaches to Naphthridine Derivatives," at the Beta Kappa Chi National Institutes of Science Meeting. Dr. George Neely has had two papers accepted for the Annual Meeting of the Association of General and Liberal Studies. These papers are "Science for Non-Scientists" and "Reclassification Scheme for the Liberal Arts: The Effects of the Knowledge Boom."

In the Social Science Division, Dr. Carroll Bourg delivered the presidential address "Politics and Religion" to the Association for the Sociology of Religion and a paper, "The Politics of Religious Movements" at the conference on New Religious Movements held in Lincoln, England. He also lectured on "The Relevance of Max Weber" at Concordia University in Montreal.

In the Humanities and Fine Arts Division, Dr. William Piersen presented a paper, "African Survivals in the Folk Culture of Eighteenth Century New England" at the Middle Tennessee Conference on Historians. In addition, Dr. Piersen is working on a book manuscript tentatively titled The Black Yankee and on another major project, "Black Roots of Country Music." Dr. Arlene Clift presented, "Ancestors Once Removed: Slave Narrators as Precursors of the Harlem Renaissance" as part of the Harlem Renaissance Series of the Learning Library Program. This paper grew out of her work as a fellow at the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe University while on sabbatical last year. Dr. Clift's literary criticism has earned her a place as an elected member of the Executive Committee of the Afro-American Literature Discussion Group of the Modern Language Association. Dr. Frank Einstein's article, "The Politics of Nostalgia: Uses of the Past in Recent Appalachian Poetry," was published in Appalachian Journal. Dr. Jeffrey Harrold's manuscript, The Religious Vocabulary of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzerdorf, has been accepted for publication in the Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik monograph series. Dr. Harrold has been awarded a stipend by the Goethic Institute to attend a summer "Seminar zur Landeskunde" in Wiesnech, Germany. Dr. Betty Overton delivered a paper, "Teaching Black Literature in the Multi-Cultural Classroom," at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. She participated as a lecturer on "Black Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance: A Woman's View," for the Harlem Renaissance Series of the Learning Library Project. Her article on Fisk graduate and poet Sarah Fabio is included in the book Black Women Poets II to be released in July, 1981. Ms. Ann Colley's book, The Blot Upon the Brain: Madness and the Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson, has been favorably reviewed for publication by the University of Georgia Press.
Ms. Cooley's interest in Tennyson also produced a paper, "The Early Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson," at the Tennessee Philological Association.

In addition to these scholarly works, many faculty have also written proposals for grants. Again, a sampling of these serves to indicate the importance of such projects in the school's on-going teaching and research activities.
Dr. I. Wesley Elliott authored proposals for the following grants: "A Study of the Synthetic Approaches to Isoquinoline Alkaloids" through the National Institutes of Health, Minority Biomedical Support Program Fund; a graduate Traineeship in Chemistry through the National Science Foundation; and a project on Chemical Instrumentation from the Merck Company Foundation.

Dr. Carroll Bourg has been funded for a second year of a three year project in support of the Graduate Career Preparation Program in Gerontology which leads to a Master of Arts degree at Fisk. Dr. Carrell Horton has written an equipment proposal submitted to the Office of Naval Research. She has also submitted a proposal on the Effects of Desegregation to the Rockefeller Foundation.

Dr. Jessie Smith and Dr. Betty Overton have received funding from the Tennessee Commission on the Humanities for a project entitled, "Images of Blacks in Artifacts: Negatives and Positive." In addition to this grant, Dr. Overton and Dr. Elizabeth Papousek have written a proposal under the Women's Equity Act Program for a study of the attitudes of Black college women towards careers and sex roles. The grant is pending.

Dr. George Neely has received funding from the Colder Foundation to continue the MCAT Review Program at Fisk. Dr. Jessie Smith and the library staff have developed two proposals: one, to the U.S. Department of Education to strengthen library resources, the other, to the National Endowment for the Humanities - Historical Organizations Humanities Project, to conduct research and plan a series of exhibits on the theme "Black Nashville: Cultural, Economics and Social Documentation."

These activities are but a small indication of the scholarship and resourcefulness of the Fisk faculty. In addition to full-time teaching responsibilities, faculty undertake projects that will enhance their own scholarship and which will also bring attention and in some instances additional funding to the University. In these endeavors, the faculty carries out the Fisk tradition of academic excellence.
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM THE
FACULTY ASSEMBLY

FEBRUARY 1, 1983
Report to the Board of Trustees  
from the  
Faculty Assembly  
February 1, 1983

The Fisk University Faculty Assembly has prepared the following report which is being sent to the Board of Trustees through President Leonard for consideration at the meetings of the Board on February 24-25, 1983.

There are three general areas which the faculty would like to discuss with the Board. They are:

1. the continued exclusion of the faculty from the planning for the University's academic affairs;

2. the current situation of the Fisk University Library;

3. the serious concern about the University's medical plan and pension plans.

Exclusion of the Faculty

A widespread feeling exists among faculty members that they continue to be excluded from the planning for the academic affairs of the University. It comes from poor communication by the administrator, no accountability to the faculty and uncertain management of the University. At a time when the talents and energies of all persons at Fisk need to be focused on the revival of the University, the administrative leadership becomes more isolated, less communicative, stingier with information and apparently without a plan for renewal.

poor communication

- while the decision to have minor concentrations in Computer Science, Health Care Administration and Mass Communications was made last spring, no notification was sent to the faculty until late October, 1982.
- while the President had approved last June the transfer of the Department of History into the Division of Social Science, the faculty was not notified until November 15;
no accountability

- while the faculty recognizes in general the financial straits of the University, it has not been given precise and candid reports within which to plan academic program;
- while rumors grow about retrenchment in faculty and programs, there has been no full and detailed disclosure within which the faculty can plan;
- while it may necessary to reduce the size of the faculty, the "proposal" to increase the teaching load for each faculty members to 15 hours has not been formally presented with clear indications of the pedagogical implications for the liberal arts tradition of the University;

uncertain management

- in the May, 1981 report to the Board from the Faculty Assembly we read: "The faculty is frankly worried about the precipitous drop in the size of the student body." The faculty then reported the fall enrollments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1125</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1149</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>1101</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>1009</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>735</td>
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</tbody>
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We now add on: 1981 889
          1982 735

The faculty concluded the section on enrollment in its 1981 report: "...the Assembly requests that the Board immediately establish a committee consisting of Board members, administrators, faculty and students to look into the causes of declining enrollments and to suggest possible remedies" (Faculty Report, 1981, page 5). The faculty regrets that is recommendation has been ignored.
It becomes extremely difficult to plan the academic program with such an unstable enrollment.

The Fisk University Library

The faculty is very concerned by the state of the Library, and its concern was heightened by the report of Dr. Jessie Smith at the meeting of October 20, 1982. The resolution passed at the meeting of December 9 is given in appendix I. Financial problems may make the acquisition of
books temporarily impossible, and the incorporation of the few that do come in difficult because of problems with the duplication of library cards and with binding, but the interruption of subscriptions to journals and reference materials is even more damaging to the instructional mission of the University. Most journals are not current. In addition, such basic reference sources as the following have not been current for a period now approaching two years.

Bibliographical Index; Biography Index; Book Review Index;

Books in Print; Contemporary Authors; Current Biography;

Encyclopedia of Business Information Sources;

Essay and General Literature Index; Humanities Index;

Information Please Almanac; McGraw-Hill Yearbook of Science and Technology;

New York Times Index; Political Science Annual;

Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature; Social Science Index;

Who's Who in America

The Special Collections also has not been able to acquire the following reference works:

1. Afro-U.S.A. (new edition)
2. Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians
3. Bibliography of Black Music (3 vols.)
4. The Black Resource Guide
5. Blacks in Selected Newspapers, Censuses and Other Sources
7. Index to Black American Writers in Collective Biographies
8. Index to Periodicals by and about Negroes
9. The Progress of Afro-American Women: A Selected
Since late 1981, the faculty has been concerned about the University's delay in making payments to the medical and pension funds. In the fall, 1981, the Faculty Assembly brought this matter to the attention of the administration, and at a subsequent meeting of the Assembly Mr. Bell answered questions about the delay in payments. At the Board meetings in May, 1982 and October, 1982, the faculty brought the same matter to the attention of the members of the Board's Committee on Education and Research. In each instance, the faculty asked for voluntary compliance to the University's obligations to make payments in a timely fashion, but the faculty's request was ignored.

At its December 1982, meeting, the Fisk Faculty Assembly voted to seek legal advice with regard to the medical and pension plans. On January 17, 1983, the faculty requested from Mr. Bell copies of the plans with Provident Mutual and with TIAA-CREF, as well as schedule of payments made by the University to the two plans during calendar 1981 and 1982. On January 19, Mr. Bell by phone reported that the President wanted such requests to be sent to him. On that same day, January 19, a letter was sent to President Leonard asking for copies of the plans. Reference was made in both letters to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) which clearly supports the right to obtain copies of the plans. Since the faculty has not yet received copies of the plans from the President, it has not yet decided which action to pursue.

Among the remedies open to the faculty are the following:

1. the faculty could report the violations to the Department of Labor;
2. the faculty could sue for violation of fiduciary responsibility.

Both of these alternatives have unattractive consequences.
Concluding Recommendation

The Fisk Faculty Assembly wishes to discuss the exclusion of the faculty from planning, the current situation of the Library, and the uncertain situation of the medical and pension plans. We request that the Executive Committee of the Board meet as soon as possible with the Executive Committee of the Fisk Faculty Assembly.
Fisk Faculty Assembly Action, December 9, 1982.

The Fisk University Faculty Assembly was seriously disturbed to learn from the report to the Librarian at the October 1982 Faculty Assembly Meeting that financial limitations have brought a halt to book and periodical ordering for the Library.

While we appreciate Fisk's perilous financial position, we also recognize that library resources and materials are a sine qua non of higher education. We recommend that priorities be immediately set so that in this area, as in others, our limited funds can be husbanded into the most necessary purchases.

Many Fisk faculty have the interest and knowledge to help set University priorities as well as to write grant proposals to further develop scarce resources. We would like to be a part of the struggle for Fisk's future; to do this we must share in making the crucial decisions. We believe one step toward the solution to our problems lies in unifying the talents and efforts of the full University community.
Observers' Report

Meeting of the Fisk University Board of Trustees
February 24-25, 1983

Thursday, February 24, fifteen (15) trustees were present
Friday, February 25, thirteen (13) trustees were present

Much of the Thursday meeting was spent in Executive Session. We have learned that while some members of the Board wanted a committee of the Board to meet with the Faculty Assembly's Executive Committee, the President was strongly opposed. Indeed, President Leonard said that the Board would have to seek another President if a Board committee met with the Faculty committee.

The President's report to the Board was made during the opening session. Much of that report echoed the statements made to the Faculty and staff at its most recent meeting called by the President on February 1.

President Leonard reported that 70% of Fisk's problems are financial, 20% are problems of the physical plan and 10% are problems of human relations. That Fisk has not been adequately financed since 1970 and that the President cannot do anything without money. If enough money were available, the problems of the physical plant would be eliminated and the human relations problems would be reduced by half. Too, creative tension would be civil, nondemagogic and above board.

It is the president's view that the financial status imposes on interpersonal relationships and causes persons to lash out at each other.

President Leonard was critical of the recent newspaper publicity and noted that there are Uncle Toms, Aunt Thomasinas, Judases, demagogues, saboteurs and white missionaries among the faculty who cover up the inadequacy for their primary tasks by encouraging negative publicity. Radical surgery is needed.

The president reiterated his conviction that copies of the retirement and medical plans would not be given to any person or group unless the Board directed him to do so. Those persons who seek information should visit the Personnel office. When Dr. Bourg reminded him of the federal law which guarantees employees the right to such information, President Leonard stated that he would not give copies of the Plan to Dr. Bourg because "he knew what he
planned to do with such information," and that if need be he "would see him in court."

Further, Dr. Leonard stated that the future of Fisk is not the prerogative of faculty, students or administrators; it is the responsibility of the Board and may not be delegated to anyone except those persons who report directly to the Board. The Board must support the person in charge or he cannot function. It is counter productive to quibble over who has the power to make decisions.

All entities have been encouraged to speak out; the Forum also has the right to express its views with civility. Trust is a two-way street and unless there is a perception of oneness in terms of destination, Fisk will be read about in history books.

Dr. Leonard thanked the Board for its serious discussion of the Assembly's concerns noting that the record will indicate that the Board wrestled with subject matter that was not new.

That most members of the Assembly do not share Dr. Leonard's statistical estimate was noted by Dr. Bourg who offered the view that our major problems are in the area of human relations rather than financial and that even a large infusion of money will not improve human relations and that for the past several years, the Board has refused appeals to discuss matters with the Assembly and with students and that it has listened to only one voice in these years.

Dr. Forde assured the Board that the Assembly's request for a meeting was based on its perception of the problems which are very serious and which will not go away.

The Board Chairman, Mr. Kean, reported that although the Board share the concerns of the Assembly, it is inappropriate for the Board to meet the Assembly committee. He emphasized the necessity of presenting a unified family front to the public.

It was announced by President Leonard that Mr. Kean has resigned as Chairman of the Board; no mention was made of a new chairman.

On Thursday afternoon, the Committees of the Board met. Four were in session: the Trusteeship Committee, the Committee on Physical Plant, Development and Business Affairs meeting together, the Committee on Student Affairs, and the Committee on Education and Research. Copies of the reports prepared for the Committee on Education and Research may be borrowed from the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of
the Faculty Assembly or from any of the three Directors of Divisions.

On Friday morning, there were Committee Reports on the Physical Plant, on Education and Research and on Student Affairs. The Committee on Physical Plant was mainly concerned about the heating system.

The Committee on Education and Research recommended to Board action that:

1. The Dean be authorized as a temporary measure to save money to assign up to 15 hours teaching to a faculty member but under precise conditions and according to the circumstances of the particular department, and according to the number of the preparations and the size of classes.

2. Promotions be awarded to the following: Arlene Clift to Professor; Dilip Bhowmik to Associate Professor; Bruce Tucker and Hayward Farrar to Assistant Professor.

3. Sabbaticals be approved for Professors Kennedy, Thieme, Piersen and Johns.

The Committee on Student Affairs reported on their discussion about the widespread fear on campus. While some attempted to deny the existence of the fear, and the President defied anyone to cite specific instances in which he contributed to the fear, there ensued a spirited discussion which was ended by the Chairman because he would not allow such "acrimonious" exchange.

The Or am group reported on fundraising proposals for Fisk. The group was hired by the University in mid-January. The spokesman began his report by saying: "ain't nobody guilty about anything anymore." The strategy for fundraising was identified in a preliminary way. Or am had directed fundraising for Meharry some years ago, and had also been in charge of fundraising campaigns on different occasions at 13 other historically black colleges.
APPENDIX B
Dear Dean Harwell:

After a goodly amount of thought, it is my considered conclusion that some official action must be taken regarding the irresponsible and institutionally-destructive conduct attributable to the above-named students. These students, for more than five months, engaged in, encouraged and supported activities calculated to denigrate the Institution, slander persons and officials associated with Fisk, and convey through the media and the mail non-truths through which strangers, parents, students -- present and potential -- alumni, donors and friends could be easily led to erroneous and damaging conclusions about the School. Let me cite a few examples:

1. In May, Dean Harwell informed Student Government that the School would be unable to employ or pay students to remain on the campus during the Summer. This was knowingly mis-reported by the above persons.

2. At least two meetings were attended by S.G.A. Officers at which information relative to the University's continuing financial crisis was discussed. The information later circulated by the above students was incendiary and calculated to confuse.

3. Both Mr. Jennings and Miss Burnett are aware that no tenured faculty person has been fired by the University. Yet, they affixed their signatures to a recent communication which is knowingly false.

4. As the Institution has attempted to repair the physical damages which resulted from last semester's disturbances, it has become clear that the estimate related in the Presidential Memorandum was too low. The above-named students signed a July 8, 1980 communication which deliberately misrepresents this fact.
Dean John Harwell  
July 30, 1980  

page 2

You might wish to advise these students that they have reached our destination of tolerance and suffering. Further, you might inform them that future acts of disruption, violence, slander, misrepresentation, and interference with the normal administrative and academic procedures of the University could result in one or more of the following:

a. Cancellation or suspension of University Scholarship and other financial support;

b. Disciplinary probation or suspension; or

c. Expulsion from Fisk University.

The delicacy of the Institution cannot and will not permit these persons, nor any others, to jeopardize the enormous expenditures of efforts, energy and good-will that so many persons have made.

Sincerely,

Walter J. Leonard

cc: Miss Karen Bazzell
    Miss Susan J. Germaine
    Mr. Keith Jennings
    Mr. Robert H. Kean, Jr.
    Mrs. Barbara L. Watkins
    Dr. Sherman Jones
    Mr. Orrin Rucker
Mr. Walter J. Leonard  
President  
Fisk University  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  

Dear Mr. Leonard:

I am in receipt of your certified letter dated June 11, 1980, advising me that my contract with Fisk University as Dean and Provost would not be renewed for the academic year of 1980-81. I must confess that I was somewhat surprised that normal standards of common courtesy and professional etiquette did not warrant your seeking to have a personal consultation with me prior to your June letter for purposes of informing me of your intentions. Unfortunately, you adopted a less civil and somewhat coarser approach to this matter, which, in my judgment, reflects poorly upon the office of president at Fisk University. Nevertheless, this incident, as well as many others, has convinced me that our divergent philosophies and attitudes regarding humane and harmonious academic life at Fisk University would make a continued relationship between us untenable. My conclusion, however, is based upon quite different reasons than those implied, though not expressly stated, in your June letter. Because I reached this conclusion sometime ago, my resignation would have been forthcoming at any event notwithstanding your letter.

Since your June letter is a matter of permanent record and therefore may adversely affect my future professional career, I believe it is appropriate that I respond in detail to its content. Such a response is significantly compelling due to the unfair and erroneous implications concerning me contained in said letter.

You mentioned in your said June letter that the Board of Trustees Fact Finding Committee was critical of my activities during the student boycott which occurred this spring at Fisk University. While you have never provided me with the details of any such conclusion or findings relative to my activities during the boycott of classes, nor was I ever put on notice of your personal dissatisfaction with my conduct during those frustrating days, I would hope, however, that the Committee was informed by you that you did not involve me personally or the office of the Dean and Provost of the University in any definitive way relative to the deliberations concerning the student strike. In short, I was deliberately excluded from a problem area in which I should have been involved in resolving. In fact, there were only two brief occasions in which you allowed me an opportunity to speak with you regarding the boycott of classes. One such occasion was a brief discussion on a Saturday morning during the Aaron Douglas auction in the school parking lot. Obviously, this was not the best location or opportunity for a serious discussion regarding a very serious problem. The only other occasion was the morning that I called your home and accidentally discovered that a meeting was planned by you and other school administrators. Only after my call was I invited to participate. At no other time was I involved in any discussions regarding the boycott.
Regrettably and unfortunately, you never sought my counsel on the student boycott problem, nor sought my opinion regarding its origin or resolution. More disturbingly, you never chose to discuss this very serious situation in any meaningful way with the faculty. Finally, you erected an impenetrable communication barrier between yourself and the student body, thereby setting the stage for the resulting chaos and confusion. Only after the intervention of my office and other concerned faculty members was the total collapse of university life on our campus avoided, inasmuch as my office and concerned faculty members convinced student leaders to encourage the student body to return to classes. Further, because of your failure to communicate with faculty members, the faculty chose to directly communicate with the Board of Trustees relative to the controversy. Because of my concern and that of the Dean's advisory council relative to the implications of the boycott, the student leaders accepted our strong suggestion that they attempt to convince the student body to return to class at the next scheduled town meeting. With the assistance of Dr. Theodore Sykes, Professor of Mathematics, who attended the town meeting, the student leaders were able to get a vote plan for the next day on the issue. The student body elected to return to classes. This is not conduct unbecoming of the Dean of the University and Provost, especially in light of the complete void in directions from your office. I must add that I do not regret those actions that I felt compelled to take in this matter, which, in my judgment, saved the University an enormous amount of anguish. If my salutary actions outlined above constituted the reasons for your terminating my relationship with Fisk, then so be it.

Additionally, you made mention in your said June letter of your perception of the role and responsibility of the Dean and Provost of the University. Let me say that our respective perceptions of the role and responsibility of this office are entirely compatible. Indeed, due to my substantial experience in the academic community, including faculty membership, several academic administration internships, and academic dean, the role of the Dean of the University was quite clear to me upon my arrival at Fisk. To the extent allowed by your office, I completely fulfilled the responsibility of this position. I emphasize the point "to the extent allowed by your office." As a point of fact, I was never allowed to fully perform the role of Dean and Provost of the University. Your somewhat non-traditional approach to university administration tended to usurp the normal function of the University Dean and Provost. As you and I both know, insofar as Fisk University is concerned, the "President's person on campus" was not the Dean and Provost but Mr. Sherman Jones, with whom you vested prerogatives which substantially transgressed the parameters of my normal professional responsibility as Dean. Accordingly, what you have described as the responsibilities of the Dean and Provost is exactly what I assumed to be my duties. Regrettably, I was rebuffed, directly or indirectly, at every turn when I sought to exercise those duties. Hence, the implications of your June letter are at best, hypocritical, and at worst, simply untrue. In retrospect, it appears that you did not intend for me to ever assume the responsibilities of that office, since we both agree on what those responsibilities are.
Additionally, there is a point in your June letter that is somewhat confusing. "It serves little purpose for the office of the Dean to 'buck' thorny and often unpleasant issues to the office of the President." That statement appears to contradict the established operating procedure between the office of the Dean and the President, which you always insisted upon. The Dean recommends, only, to the President. This is and has always been your policy. Consequently, the "thorny and often unpleasant issues" always end in the President's office, for the final decision. Again, the implication of your June letter is either hypocritical or untrue.

In closing it is my judgment that a fundamental problem at Fisk is the administration's lack of true confidence and respect for the academic community as represented by the faculty. As Academic Dean for the University, I observe this attitude on numerous occasions. For example, little doubt was left in the minds of many faculty members during the troubled days of the Fisk boycott of your disregard for them and/or lack of understanding of their rightful place in the University. The faculty, its nourishment and cultivation, is of the essence in building a great university. Without that show of confidence and support from the office of the President, along with sensitive understanding of academic tradition, Fisk University will suffer the face of mediocrity. Perhaps this seeming shortsightedness is molded somewhat by the nature of your background in academic administration and your lack of experience in the traditions and nuances of the academic community. It seems that your tenure in higher education has not encompassed these experiences which would provide you with greater insight into the proper educational process and delicate balance between student, faculty and administration.

I trust that the foregoing declaration of facts sets the record straight. I must admit that I have learned a great deal from my brief association with Fisk under your administration. I assure you that treating people—whatever their station in life—in a professional and humane manner is a lesson which will serve me well in the future.

Very truly yours,

Clifford D. Harper

CDH/aps

cc: Board of Trustees
    Division Directors
    Presidents, Fisk Alumni Associations
February 8, 1962

TO: Fisk Board of Trustees

The Boston Fisk Club met on February 6, 1982 and took a vote of "no confidence" in the current Fisk Administration. We are very concerned and angered over the drastic drop in student enrollment to only 700 students, the apparent inability of the administration to raise adequate funds to put the institution on a strong financial footing, the strained and hostile relationships between the administration and the Fisk faculty as well as the low morale among students and alumni.

We do not believe that Fisk can endure another year under Walter Leonard's leadership. For the welfare and continued subsistence of Fisk we request that you not renew Walter Leonard's contract at the conclusion of this academic year.

The Boston Fisk Club supported Walter Leonard's candidacy for president of Fisk five years ago but he has not done the job and we can not stand idly by and see Fisk destroyed. The one hundred plus Greater Boston Fisk Alumni members support this request.

Sincerely,

Dr. John B. Turner
President

JBT/el

Mail-o-gram sent on
2/8/82 to attached list
of Board of Trustees
xc: Fisk Club Presidents
Mrs. Josie Johnson, President of General Alumni Association
Boston Fisk Club Members
MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Trustees, Fisk University

FROM: Walter J. Leonard

RE: Board Meeting, July 30, 1983, Nashville, Tennessee

In response to directions of Chairman Timothy B. Donaldson, please be advised that a Call Meeting of the full Board of Trustees of Fisk University, will take place at Fisk University, on July 30, 1983. While the Agenda (copy enclosed) is a full one, we expect to finish deliberations by 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon.

It would seem appropriate for me to indicate with a degree of specificity, some of the matters to which I have alluded:

1. A level of commitment to fund next year's operations such that contracts for faculty and staff may be executed;

2. Some assurance that funding will be available such that an improvement in faculty and staff compensation can be assured;

3. Some clearer commitment with respect to funding of student financial assistance;

4. Some further advice with regard to the availability of a critically needed heating system for the University;

5. Some assurance that we can begin to improve critical areas of the physical plant;

6. A clear commitment and program toward the development of a University Relations Staff (Alumni Affairs, Public and Media Relations, Development, and Government and Community Relations) such that adequate staffing may proceed in this essential area; and

7. An early effort to restore the Fisk Athletic Field.

In a recent letter to Chairman Donaldson (copy enclosed), I discussed the impact of continuing fiscal crisis facing the University and its new, as well as
Mr. John M. Seigenthaler, Sr.
President, Editor and Publisher
The Tennessean
1100 Broadway
Nashville, Tennessee 37202

Dear John:

While I have no desire to discuss the full content of one of The Tennessean's recent stories ("2.8 MILLION DEBT KEEPS FISK Mired" - Sunday, August 28, 1983) about Fisk, there are some parts of the article that require a response. I refer to those elements which, through innuendo, false and misleading information, cast a most unfavorable impression regarding the activities of this individual. In order that we might abate further misinformation — through reproduction of your article or quotes therefrom — I am compelled to clear the record with regard to some matters. Let me be more specific with respect to those areas about which this letter concerns:

1. When I came to Fisk as President in 1977, the Board of Trustees offered, and I accepted, a contract through which the University obligated itself to guarantee 30 days of vacation time during each year of the five year contract. Further, the Board obligated the University to pay, at the end of the five year contract (1977-1982), an amount equal to one year's annual salary — a sort of "free year" or "sabbatical year". Incidentally, this latter offer is not new; similar offers are frequently employed in institutions of higher education as well as in private industry. In fact, several members of the Fisk faculty have had sabbatical leaves — paid by the University — since I have been here. In any event, at the conclusion of my five year contract I had used a total of only 20 days of vacation time. Thus the Institution was legally and morally obligated to compensate me for 130 days of accrued and unused vacation time. Moreover, the Institution, by contract, was obligated to compensate me in an amount equal to my annual salary ($52,500) at that time and the amount due as annual salary was $70,000. It was clear to me, and should have been — and should be — clear to anyone who has been slightly familiar with the situation at Fisk over the past 15 years, that the Institution could not
possibly pay this amount to me or anyone else. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees asked me to remain at the Institution beyond the five year contract. Given my knowledge of the Institution's financial crisis, I would have been very uncomfortable accepting a payment of ($70,000) the total obligation. Albeit it was legally and morally due to me and my family.

Consequently, upon a recommendation of members of the Board of Trustees, I accepted $15,000 as full payment of the $70,000 which was due and promised. Thus, the Institution was saved $55,000. Or, put another way, my family made an in-kind gift to the Institution in the amount of $55,000.

2. Your newspaper reported that Fisk placed certain funds in an account at Merrill Lynch and the National Bank of Washington as retirement accounts for me. That is completely, knowingly, and utterly false. The facts are these: During the 1981 and 1982 school year Fisk found itself unable to make payments, on a timely basis, on retirement funds for faculty and administrative personnel. In fact nothing was paid for the President of the University between February of 1982 and June of 1983. The University was making periodic payments during this period of time (not all that was due) into the retirement funds for faculty and staff personnel. As of June 1, 1983 the University's obligation to my own retirement fund had reached a level of $13,239.66. I made a personal decision not to ask the University to place additional funds, for me, in the insurance carrier (TIM-CREF) to which payments had been made for me as well as other faculty and staff members before February 1982; and into which payments were still being made for faculty and other administrative personnel. Rather, I decided, as it was and is my right to decide, that I would have payments made — when funds were available — into a different retirement fund. Consequently on May 20, 1983 I prepared a memorandum indicating how I would want the University to discharge its obligation to me when funds were available and after substantial payments had been made for faculty and staff members. After the University made substantial payments to the insurance carrier for faculty and staff it released one payment in the amount of $5,000 towards its obligation to me. No other payments have been made to or for me. At this time the University is obligated to me in the amount of $11,239.66. What this means is that of a $16,239.66 obligation I have received less than one third ($5,000). Am I not entitled to receive payment and protection for me and my family?

I wonder why your newspaper did not report these facts. I wonder why there was such a great rush to greet our incoming students and their parents with such a negative, one-sided, misleading, and partly false story about Fisk. I wonder why there was such anxiousness to tarnish the Institution and to attempt to assassinate the character of an individual.
Mr. John M. Seigenthaler, Sr.
September 7, 1983
Page 3

Please be sure that this statement is issued only because there are persons about whom I care; persons who should not be confused or misled with regard to activities which impinge on my lifelong standard of personal dignity and individual integrity.

In fine, contrary to the Tennessean's reports, Fisk University has not opened an account for me at Merrill Lynch, the National Bank of Washington or any other financial institution. I realize that a correction seldom gets the attention of an initial article. It is the nature of malictory and disparaging statements to travel much faster and farther than the truth. It is my hope, however, because of the serious implications and disturbing innuendos, that the Tennessean will be interested in having its reading public know the truth.

With every good wish for fairness, justice, and truth, I am

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Walter J. Leonard
President

WJL:bkm

cc: Selected Individuals
During recent days, you, Charlie Warfield and I have had a couple of good and substantive conversations relative to matters at Fisk. Our discussions have been comprehensive; they have ranged to include prior difficulties; the current crisis, prescriptions for corrective actions and preventive measures in the future. We have been candid, honest and open with each other.

One of the matters, about which we have talked — central and essential to public relations, public opinion and institutional image — has been the analysis of facts that have led to this critical juncture in which the School finds itself. How did Fisk get into this most recent problem and what has brought about our longer range financial difficulties. Fisk did not get into this situation overnight. Nor has this situation gone un-discussed. I think it's important for us to review some facts pertinent to our overall financial stabilization.

A. You and I know — and about every Trustee who has served longer than one year — that in:
   - every announcement
   - every appeal for funds
   - every conversation
   - every debate or discussion
   - every letter or memorandum
   - every meeting of the Board
   - every meeting of the faculty and staff
   - every Report to the Board and Alumni
   - every television or radio message

I have — sometimes painfully — outlined the fiscal and physical plant problems confronting this School;

B. During the past six years — and according to some reports, before I came — the Board has been urged to take steps toward correcting the heating problem at Fisk.
C. During the most recent four years, I have begged the Board to help find and put in place a standby boiler, which would be capable of using an alternative form of fuel. Some Board members have attempted to find some out-of-use boiler which could be placed at Fisk; and some efforts have been made to obtain a boiler by way of gift.

These efforts have been unproductive and I have been told to explore the possibility of further borrowing in order to correct the situation.

D. The Institution had borrowed up to its capacity. Unfortunately, it seemed that for every dollar raised there are, and have been, at least three legitimate claims. Such a fiscal situation precludes further borrowing and without effective efforts to raise substantial capital, further borrowing adds to the debt and maintains the Institution on the brink of disaster. Moreover, since the School has had very little collateral, any loans obtained have come essentially, on my credibility. After being unable to repay loans on a timely basis — because such funds — were not available to the School, my personal representations were no longer persuasive. A very unfortunate predicament in which to place a college president.

E. As early as 1978, after getting a better hold of Fisk's fiscal status, I published the first of several comprehensive Reports and issued the third of many pleas. A small portion of that Report, delivered to the Board in May 1978, tells the story:

"As we approached the beginning of the 1979-80 school year, the fiscal records indicated that the University was solvent. But the tremendous amount of capital required to meet prior obligations prevented required improvements in the physical plant and improvements to further enhance and strengthen educational programs.

Let me be a bit more specific:

- Between 1965-66 and 1976-77, Fisk withstood cash deficits and incursions into its endowment amounting to $8,442,366;

- The deferred maintenance (deficit in the physical plant upkeep) was estimated at $7,500,000;

- In June of 1977, unpaid bills and outstanding checks amounted to $2,200,000. If one totals these figures one sees emerging a bleak picture of a University straddled by more than $18,000,000 in accumulated debt of various kinds.
The bold, sad and trying fact is, however, that Fisk as strong and resilient as it is, requires a massive infusion of capital, an abundance of energy and positive ideas to successfully rendezvous with an uncompromising and demanding future. Nothing less than total commitment to the University, particularly by those persons who have been associated with or whose education or professional reputation and intellectual growth have come from the University, should be expected. It has taken Fisk many years to get into this awful and sad mess. Our endowment has been significantly reduced. Our physical plant is deteriorating. Our spirits are low. At this time, all available unrestricted funds must be directed to operating expenses and critical maintenance problems. Fisk needs financial help, and plenty of it.

From 1967 through 1974, Fisk suffered deficits in its operating fund because of a combination of factors. Even with the infusion of federal dollars, many students were unable or unwilling to discharge their financial obligations to the University. This, coupled with inflation and the absence of spending controls, began to increase the deficits in the current operating fund. The Board of Trustees, in support of recommendations of the administration, began to fund the deficits by liquidating the endowment. In 1967, Fisk had an endowment of approximately $14,000,000. At the end of the next decade (1967-76) the endowment had shrunk to a market value of less than $3,000,000; the accumulated deficit had reached more than $2,000,000; and there was almost universal agreement that, short of a miracle, the University would have to close its doors.

You and I, and Trustees, Faculty and Alumni, know that when I came here in 1977, Fisk University had neither the assets nor the cash flow capable of carrying it into the next two (2) years. The problem now is cash flow. The Institution's net assets position has improved by more than $5,000,000 since 1977.

I am advised that there are several persons, of influence and wealth who are prepared to invest either, or both, in Fisk. Further, I am advised that such persons are reluctant to make those gifts, or to use their influence unless there is some dramatic change or occurrence at the Institution. Please be advised that if my presence is preventing such persons from assisting Fisk — as some suggest — then we shall remove that excuse or reason.
Finally, you will recall that during the past, I have asked the Board of Trustees (at least three times) to consider the appointment of a Committee on the Presidency. Each time, the Board has graciously and persuasively asked me to remain at Fisk. It now seems that a sufficient number of Board members are interested, active and planning, such the future of Fisk is assured. The permanence of Fisk remains uppermost in my mind. Accordingly, please be advised that my tenure as President of Fisk University will not extend beyond the current (1983-84) school year.

With every good wish and warmest personal regards, I remain

Sincerely,

Walter J. Leonard
President
Fisk University

WJL/mfd

cc: Fisk University Board of Trustees
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A - Alumni Trustee
E - Trustee Emeritus
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Fisk University Board of Trustees
1982-1983

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HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 1987

ALABAMA
Alabama A&M University
Alabama State University
Concordia College
Miles College
Oakwood College
Selma University
Stillman College
Talladega College
Tuskegee University

ARKANSAS
Arkansas Baptist College
Philander Smith College
Shorter College
University of Arkansas

DELAWARE
Delaware State College

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Howard University
University of the District of Columbia

FLORIDA
Bethune-Cookman College
Edward Waters College
Florida A&M University
Florida Memorial College

GEORGIA
Albany State College
Clark-Atlanta University
Fort Valley State College
Interdenominational Theological Center
Morehouse College
Morris Brown College
Paine College
GEORGIA (cont’d)

Savannah State College
Spelman College

KENTUCKY
Kentucky State University
Simmons University Bible College

LOUISIANA
Dillard University
Grambling State University
Southern University at Baton Rouge
Southern University at New Orleans
Southern University at Shreveport
Xavier University

MARYLAND
Bowie State College
Coppin State College
Morgan State University
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

MISSISSIPPI
Alcorn State University
Jackson State University
Mary Holmes College
Mississippi Industrial College
Mississippi Valley State College
Rust College
Tougaloo College

MISSOURI
Harris-Stowe State College
MISSOURI (cont’d)

Lincoln University
NORTH CAROLINA
Barber-Scotia College
Bennett College
Elizabeth City State University
Fayetteville State University
Johnson C. Smith University
Livingstone College
North Carolina A&T University
North Carolina Central University
St. Augustine's College
Shaw University
Winston-Salem State University

OHIO
Central State University
Wilberforce University

OKLAHOMA
Langston University

PENNSYLVANIA
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
Lincoln University, Pennsylvania

SOUTH CAROLINA
Allen University
Benedict College
Claflin College
Morris College

SOUTH CAROLINA (cont'd)
South Carolina State College
Voorhees College

TEXAS
Lemoyne-Owen College
Meharry Medical College
Tennessee State University

VIRGINIA
Hampton University
Norfolk State University
St. Paul's College
Virginia Seminary & College
Virginia State University
Virginia Union University

WEST VIRGINIA
West Virginia State College

231
Public College Costs

1972-1987

Source: State of Working America
Private College Costs
1972-1987

Source: State of Working America

Fig. B
HBCUS By Type and Control
Fall 1987

4-yr public (38) 38.4%
2-yr private (7) 7.1%
2-yr public (5) 5.1%
4-yr private (49) 49.5%

Source: Dept. of Education
Mr. Chairman, as you and other members of the Board of Trustees will recall -- from several briefings and memoranda -- there have been several times, particularly during 1982 and 1983, when we were not certain whether funds would be available, on a timely basis, to cover the University's payroll and related obligations. On more than one occasion, during that period, the President had to make emergency trips to such places as New York City, Chicago and other cities for the purpose of soliciting resources such that the employees of Fisk could be paid.

Often these efforts resulted in just enough currency to guarantee the net amount of the School's payroll obligation. In those instances, when there was revenue enough for only net payroll, the Institution did not -- could not -- send the required amounts to cover various deductions; whether such deductions were personal or institutional.

The Institution, upon realizing that fiscal resources were unavailable to cover payrolls and related expenses, had the following options:

A. Refrain from distributing funds to any of its employees and thereby hold itself free from any expenses incident to such distribution;

B. Consider the hardship that employees would experience if the net payroll were not distributed; proceed to make those net payments and then search for funds to cover the financial obligations related to the payroll; or

C. Close its doors -- cease to exist -- and thereby eliminate the pressure and push of those expectations and obligations akin to efforts involved in providing employment, service and maintaining an important institution.
Of these options, it seemed that (B) was the only viable action and reasonable decision. Given the Board's vow to raise $3,000,000 in 1977, $5,000,000 in 1982 and the plan to raise $2,000,000 in 1983 (over and above the efforts of the President) Officers of the University, we, were persuaded to provide net-payroll proceeds to University employees. The fundraising plans announced by Trustees, did not materialize. Consequently, the School, and its Officers, came under great criticism, unwarranted attacks and empty charges.

After considerable effort to find funds enough to liquidate Fisk's current and accumulated obligations (in the face of constantly rising costs, fundraising efforts limited primarily to the President's Office, negative internal actions and various anti-Fisk activities) we began negotiations with vendors such as the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, ARA and others.

In October of 1983, during the regular Fall Meeting of the Board of Trustees, administrative Officers of the University were directed to withdraw from efforts and activities designed to obtain agreements with creditors or vendors. Demonstrable of the Board's intention was its rejection of an accord which had been reached with ARA. Further, after a meeting with IRS Agents, John James and Harry Martin, the Board was unequivocal in its bar to further such actions by the President and members of his staff. The reason given was that the Board did not wish any creditor or vendor to obtain a seeming advantage in relationship to others. Further, it was stated that members of the Executive Committee would engage in all future negotiations.

After the passage of several weeks, and repeated contacts from creditors and vendors, University officers learned that meetings were not being held, negotiations were not going forward with the Internal Revenue Service nor with ARA. In fact, an Officer of the University, contrary to the Board's directive, received several requests to engage in negotiations with ARA. Because of the importance of the matter, I sent the following letter to the Chairman of the Board:

"John Harwell informs me that he has received requests to reengage in negotiations with various University creditors and vendors. While these actions have been asked for, primarily by Mr. Warfield, we must presume that they carry your stamp of approval."
Please be advised that I have instructed Mr. Harwell to refrain from such action until I am in receipt of a response to this communication.

My instructions to Mr. Harwell are based on the deliberations and decisions of the Board, clearly and convincingly taken, during the meeting of October 6 and 7, 1983. You will recall that after several months of negotiations with ARA and other vendors, we presented, for information, an agreement which has been reached with ARA and potential agreements with other creditors. The Board of Trustees vigorously and adamantly rejected, indeed repudiated, our efforts and admonished us to take no further steps toward arriving at agreements with University creditors or vendors.

As usual, we are faithful to the letter and the spirit of the directions and policies emanating from Board action. Consequently, we have withheld our energies in these directions. We have had to presume that efforts were being made toward effectuating some arrangements acceptable to the Board of Trustees.

The recent requests made of Mr. Harwell are in direct opposition to the orders handed down to us in the October Board meeting. Therefore, if we are not to pursue various measures of accommodation and agreement with University vendors, we must have, in writing, from you a statement indicating a change in Board though, position, disposition, direction and policy. We shall be happy to move on these matters upon receipt of your instructions." (January 9, 1984)

As of this writing, February 8, 1984, there has not been a response -- oral or written -- to this clear request for guidance. In the face of such silence, with respect to these matters, considering the criticality of the issues involved and recognizing the responsibility of the Office of the President, we requested a meeting with the Agents of the Internal Revenue Service.

**Internal Revenue Service**

The meeting occurred on January 18, 1984 in the President's Office at Fisk. Involved in the meeting were: John James and Harry Martin of the Internal Revenue Service and John S. Harwell and Walter J. Leonard, Fisk University. We were advised that the Agents had expected a meeting an agreement between the IRS and Fisk shortly after the October Meeting: They informed us that failure by representatives of the Board to meet with them compelled a decision to seek
other remedies, such as personal assessment against University Officers.

Faced with this ultimatum from the I.R.S., we took action. On January 18, 1984, Fisk paid $125,000 and on January 25, 1984 an additional payment, in the amount of $180,000 was made toward the IRS debt.

A.R.A.

On Saturday, January 21, 1984, at Trustee visited the President's Residence. During a wide-ranging discussion, covering a number of items with regard to Fisk, the President was asked to re-open negotiations with A.R.A. There was assurance of Board approval of such effort; and there was assurance that funds would be available to meet A.R.A.'s demand for an initial payment of $50,000 to $100,000. Hoping to bring the matter to some sort of accord and determined to demonstrate our continuing cooperation, and resting on the assurance of funding, we re-opened negotiations. After a few days, an agreement was reached: $50,000 immediately $50,000 on February 9, 1984 and $25,000 per month at 12% interest. When the funds were not forthcoming from expected sources; with our word and good names involved in the negotiations; we arranged to borrow $50,000 on the personal guarantee of Walter J. Leonard and John S. Harwell, in order to consummate the transaction and to keep a promise that had been made in good faith.

TIAA-CREF

We have wanted to correct the impairment caused by lack of funds with regard to TIAA-CREF; consequently, payments were made on January 20, 1984 balancing the TIAA-CREF accounts (with respect to employee contributions) through December 31, 1983. Payments on the accounts amounted to $20,294.09. Additionally, we assured TIAA-CREF that any loss of earnings would be made by the University.

Physical Plant Repairs

The Winter of 1983-84 has already wreaked havoc with the Fisk campus. Frozen pipes, added to the continuing -- nearly twenty-year-old problem of busted steam lines. These problems continue to compound the already difficulty problem of improving the Fisk Physical Plant. Before the severity of the Winter, we were making some headway with a few of the very much needed repairs.

Van Vechten
Renovation of the Gallery continues apace. The total renovation — including special and independent atmospheric and security controls — is expected to be completed within a year. You will recall that this is being done under a grant of $386,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce and a $50,000 personal gift from Miss Georgia O'Keeffe.

Roofs

The following buildings were leaking such that we were compelled to have new roofs installed:

- Heating Plant
- DuBois Hall
- Tally Brady Building
- Livingston Hall
- Basic College Building
- Shane Hall
- Scribner Hall
- Crosthwaite
- Faculty Complex (all units)
- 1603 Meharry Boulevard
- 1806 Morena
- 929 Todd Boulevard
- 926 17th Avenue North
- 909 Todd Boulevard
- Chapel
- Gymnasium

This state of affairs has been most unfortunate. It has been disrupted the normal activities of the academic program and, in some instances, produced a goodly measure of frustration. Fisk people, plus independent contractors, have worked — very hard — sometimes around the clock to bring normalcy and order to the Campus.

Fundraising Efforts

Five Mayors support Fisk

Marion Barry, Washington, DC
Tom Bradley, Los Angeles, California
Richard Fulton, Nashville, Tennessee
James W. McIntire, Augusta, Georgia
Andrew Young, Atlanta, Georgia

Howard University — The following activities have taken place at or because of efforts initiated by President James
E. Cheek:

1. A personal gift in the amount of $1,000 from President Ronald W. Reagan;
2. A collection and related gifts in the amount of $6,100 from Shiloh Baptist Church;
3. A collection in the amount of $5,000 from Zion Baptist Church;
4. Newspaper in some parts of the Country have carried advertisements, placed by Dr. Cheek, requesting funding support for Fisk;
5. Howard's Radio (WHUR) is currently in the process of a Radiothon. As of today, February 8, 1984, more than $70,000 had been pledged toward a goal of $100,000;
6. More than 500 of the 7,000 employees of Howard have made contributions to Fisk;
7. President Cheek has asked the Washington, D.C. area members of his fraternity to send contributions to Fisk;
8. Faculty, Administrative Staff and the student body of Howard University have organized themselves around an effort to preserve Fisk University; and
9. Approximately 100 Black religious, civic and political leaders have organized themselves into a National Committee for the preservation of Fisk University.

It is my hope that the Trustees' plans include ways to help President Cheek find the funds to help us preserve this Institution. As of this writing, President Cheek's efforts have produced more than $83,000 (from Howard, Faculty and Friends) for Fisk; other efforts are still in the organizational stage.

**Florida A & M University Effort** – Walter L. Smith, President of Florida A & M University, working with two members of his staff, has collected funds from faculty and staff of FAMU, as well as solicited financial support from the Tallahassee area.

**Delaware State College** – Dr. Gladys D. W. Motley, Vice President for Student Affairs, has organized a student effort at Delaware State in support of Fisk.
Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship - IMF, an organization of Black churches, pastors and ministers, has developed a trust fund to support the historical black colleges and universities in Tennessee. The fund, as perceived by IMF, is to have a corpus of approximately $100,000 annually from the 200 or so Black churches in Tennessee. The proceeds (income) will be used to assist students attending American Baptist College, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University. Other recent efforts have included two citywide activities in support of Fisk.

Edgar M. College - Class of 1950 – I am happy to report that after approximately six months of conversations, including one dinner in Los Angeles, Edgar M. Cole has made a gift to the University in the amount of $51,000.00, $1,000 to be used immediately (as was his earlier gift of $1,500 in 1983) and $50,000 to establish an Edgar M. Cole Scholarship Fund. Our research indicates that this is the third largest single gift by an alumnus in the history of the University; the large ones having been given by John and James Burrus and Joe Brown. Ed Cole took this action to support our continuing efforts to preserve the Institution; to motivate his fellow alumni; and to support students who might otherwise, but for some financial assistance, not have an opportunity for a Fisk University education.

George E. Johnson – Mr. Johnson, President of Johnson Products Company, Inc. of Chicago, Illinois, has contributed 3,000 share of common stock of his Company (worth $27,000) toward supporting the University. These funds, like the Edgar Cole gift, have been placed in the University's endowment in the style of the George E. Johnson Scholarship Fund. This is the third gift, within recent years, directly from Mr. Johnson. In 1977, he contributed $10,000 toward the restoration of the Chapel and a bronze bust of Dean William Faulkner, valued at approximately $10,000.

It is our hope that the Cole and Johnson gifts will be matched through the endowment funding recently made available through the Department of Education under Title III.

National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. – Rev. T. J. Jemison – Several of the Churches affiliated with the above Convention were asked to sponsor a Fisk University Sunday during the month of December. Rev. Jemison is expected to advise us of the results of this activity during early March.

Fisk Clubs – Several Fisk Alumni Clubs have sponsored a variety of activities in order to raise funds for the
University. A number of reports have come to the University from some of the most active clubs.

**Friends Of and For Fisk** — A variety of groups and individuals registered their concern and assistance for the School. Concerts, dinners, parties, McDonald Cook-Ins and Fundraising receptions have been organized throughout the Country.

**Private Gifts and Grants since November, 1983** — The University has received and receipted $1,041,488.42. With these funds, the Institution has been able to continue to meet many of its current and continuing obligations. Since November 1, 1983, the School has paid the following utilities and related obligations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Electric Service</td>
<td>45,899.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Bell</td>
<td>25,920.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Revenue Service</td>
<td>305,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Gas Company</td>
<td>352,554.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Water and Sewer</td>
<td>8,300.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIAA-CREF</td>
<td>20,294.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Materials</td>
<td>20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Repairs (roofs, pipes, etc.)</td>
<td>225,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these efforts and payments have provided a slight degree of release, the enormous and daily pressure continues. As we, all of us, know it is not possible, without a massive infusion of resources, to erase the direct and side effects of a fifteen-year-old accumulated deficit. Fortunately, we have a broad and mass appeal, plus a wide spectrum of friends and supporters such that our life-line has been sustained while some of the Trustees and their advisors have had time to plan for Trustee fundraising and solicitation effort.

**Continuing Concerns**

Mr. Chairman, as I move toward the finish-line of my tenure in this Office, I am obliged to advise the Trustees of some continuing concerns:

- The Jean Toomer Collection of Papers
- The Toussant L'Ouverture Series — (removed by David Driskell & others)
- Aaron Douglas Collection — (removed by David Driskell & others)
- Harmon Foundation Gift of Art — (removed by David Driskell & others)
- The Board of Homeland Ministries (UCC) annual allocation to Fisk has been raised to 17,000.
After more than 25 years at $13,000. This is so
much less than that received by the five other AMA
Schools efforts toward a more equitable
distribution should be continued.

The Stieglitz Collection - You might recall, in 1977
members of the Fisk Board did not know that the University
still owned this unique and valuable Collection of Art. I
had learned about the Collection through Derek Curtis Bok
who had received an inquiry, in 1976, about me from Georgia
O'Keeffe. Her inquiry advised Mr. Bok of her continuing
concern about the Collection; Fisk's seeming disinterest in
the Collection (the truth was: the Fisk Board did not know
very much about the whereabouts nor the condition of the
Collection); and her fear that the Collection would become
"lost". You will remember that one of my early priorities
after the renovation of the Chapel, repositioning of the
Jubilee Singers and some positive marketing efforts to
return it to Fisk. A request directed to the United Church
of Christ (through West Hotchkiss) and a personal visit to
Georgia O'Keeffe's home resulted in $40,000 in gifts toward
the restoration of the Collection; and an additional gift
from Miss O'Keefee in the amount of $100,000 toward the
renovation of the Gallery to house the Collection.
Moreover, the U.S. Department of Commerce, based on my
representations regarding the value of the Collection to
Fisk and Nashville, has approved a $400,000 public works
grant toward the renovation of the Gallery. The restoration
work is now completed and the works are awaiting the
restoration of the Gallery.

We have had numerous inquiries about the Collection.
Some persons have indicated an interest in buying the
Collection. Some members of Fisk's Board have suggested
selling the Collection, or some part thereof, I respectfully
submit that talk about, or consideration of, selling the
Collection are both dangerous and wrong. A goodly part of
Fisk's current problem is consequence of too many years of
deliberate and continual contraction. It is my great fear
that a resumption of such conduct, now or in the immediate
future, will soon lead to an absence of anything which could
be called a School.

The Fisk Endowment - We have had some positive results
in our efforts to rebuild some of the nearly depleted Fisk
endowment. Some that which we have rebuilt continues to be
cumbered. Consequently, there are voices on the Board and
within the Institution, calling for the liquidation of the
endowment. Few can argue with the practical and
conventional wisdom that contends against having a debt
while one has a savings account. There is one great problem
and an equally great lesson: between 1965 and 1977, Fisk
took more than $10,000,000 out of its savings account (endowment) to pay bills. Such actions, once begun, must have become easy to repeat. Unfortunately, the Institution never replaced those borrowed funds and as an after-effect, it found itself placed in an insolvent condition by 1977. May I observe that to further liquidate the little endowment which we have been able to acquire would deal a painful blow — fiscally and psychologically — to an already unnecessarily battered institution.

The Physical Plant — I find it difficult to discover new ways by which to appeal for help with the physical plant. For nearly seven years, we have exclaimed: One of the Institution’s most serious problems with respect to recruitment and general image is our continuing inability to make needed and timely repairs, renovations and improvements of dormitories common rooms, classrooms, the athletic field and the roadways and walkways throughout the campus.

University Relations and Development — I had looked forward to working with the Trustees toward the development of this critical area. We already have a good person to serve as Vice President for University Relations. Her responsibility extends to supervising Development, Alumni Affairs, Public and Media Relations, Government and Community Relations and the University's radio station (WFSK-FM). Much of the effort in this regard should center around the implementation of the Board's Plan for Development and fundraising. Further to the matter of development, while there was no report from Charlie Warfield and Phil Davidson regarding their efforts with the Wautauga Group, that group should still be courted. It was our hope to have enjoyed some of the fruits of their exertions before the end of June (1983) circumstances dictated otherwise.

Government Relations — During the 1974-1975 school year, Fisk sought a moratorium with respect to payments on those of its buildings on which the U.S. Government held a mortgage. That request, made for Fisk by Mike Zavelle, initiated dozens of letters, charges and counter charges between Fisk and federal officials. There were threats of foreclosure by the Department of Education, three trips to Washington, (by me and my staff); I do not know how many were made before I came to Fisk), the involvement of Senators Baker and Sasser and Congressman Boner, and finally there was a meeting with Dr. Brantly, Dr. Fairley and the General Counsel of the Department of Education to recast the original loan. In addition to the recasting, I asked for total forgiveness of the debt. Neither the timing nor the political support were present and appropriate for such an act of forgiveness to occur. Please note that this was long before the Meharry action. It took four year to clean up
this matter and to defuse the confusion ushered in by the 1974 initiative.

The appropriate thing for Fisk, at this time, would be to pursue a course of action directed at obtaining forgiveness of the total debt. To do otherwise is to merely rearrange debt.

The Board and University Resources – It is my belief that a member of the Board of Trustees can better and more persuasively tell the story of Fisk University to one of his or her peers. I am convinced that the world will admire, and respond to, demonstrated interest in, and support of, educational opportunities for the diverse population of youth in our nation. Promotion and preservation of Fisk exhibits both a deep understanding and commitment to work toward eliminating some of our most serious problems.

At the February (1983) Meeting of the Board, I published the following statement:

"The Board of Trustees must develop the basis of support and stability on which to build a solid and progressive future of the school."

That statement is universal and enduring with regard to all educational institutions. It is my considered judgment that no institution is likely to move above or beyond the demonstrated commitment of its Board of Trustees. It is my hope that the Fisk Board will discharge its clear obligation with respect to questions relative to economics and productivity and to caution against administrative and faculty procedures and actions capable of burdening our limited resources. It is my further wish, that our current Board will appreciate another disturbing fact: for too many years (1965-1983) the Institution has tried to spend itself out of debt (1965-1977) or borrow itself out of debt (1977-1983). Neither practice has ever been a viable one.

Mr. Chairman, while our advice, counsel or opinion has not recently been sought or followed, when volunteered, we do feel obligated, by virtue of Office, to make a few observations relative to Board actions. Permit me to share 10 Commandments for Trusteeship, as set forth in 1966 by George L. Hall:

1. Do not convene board meetings without the president in attendance.
2. Do not have anyone other than the president directly responsible to the board.
3. Do not solicit or encourage faculty complaints.
4. Do not become an advocate for those who seek college jobs.
5. Do not conduct personal investigations in the fairness of grades.
6. Do not speak for the board except when authorized to do so.
7. Refer questions pertaining to administration to the president.
8. Do not form standing committees.
9. Do not act like a trustee except in the boardroom.
10. Always get in writing.

The young men and women who attend Fisk are expected to become professionals; join the long line of graduates who have assumed leadership positions at every level of society. We ask the student to come to Fisk with a preconceived goal and purpose of high academic achievement. One may come thinking that he or she has an interest in medicine, law, business, education, engineering, nursing, the ministry, sociology, theater, ecology, bio-chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc. It does not matter. We expect a firm commitment to develop in the course of exposure to the several disciplines. Our first concern is that the student receives a sound college education.

Fisk tries to do more than offer a sound and marketable basic education. The University is convinced that it must produce graduates who are self-confident and fully ready to effectively confront the tasks which lie ahead. A major part of this comprehensive view of education is moral and value development. There is great concern about this aspect of college life, particularly, since a few students come to institutions in a sort of moral twilight zone. General society - in some cases - has not demanded a commitment to the highest standards of duty, honor and personal responsibility. It is the view of responsible persons at Fisk that a concept of honor, and the strong precepts that undergird the founding of the School, must become a rule by which Fisk men and women live. Every decision, every encounter and every opportunity must be approached with the highest ideals of honor and integrity.

In addition, Fisk continues its traditional involvement in community affairs, research, and other creative endeavors. However, recent economic trends and our financial condition have caused a modification in the University's commitment to pure research activities by the faculty. But the University's policy in this area is clear: Fisk is primarily a teaching institution whose purpose is to educate students; at the same time, the University encourages research and creative works, provided these
activities are harmonious with the Institution's obligations to its students. Fisk has had this same basic policy for decades from the pioneering efforts of George Edmund Haynes, sociologists, E. Franklin Frazier and Charles S. Johnson in the 1900's, 1930's and 1940's - culminating in the Race Relations Institute at Fisk. Our present research efforts are principally in black music; the sociology of aging; physics; clinical psychology; education; chemistry; race relations; and the law - all of which complement our teaching program.

The founders of Fisk University were imbued with a sense of mission motivated by an acknowledged responsibility to the future; sustained by a pride and humility born of successful abolition of human bondage; and sustained by an unswerving faith in religious tenants and educational ideals.

**Fisk University Institutional Mission** - Some persons, from whom assistance has been requested, and some of Fisk's Board have asked -- quite pointedly: What is the Institution's Mission? Should there be a predominantly Black School in the 1980's? What should be the mission of such an institution at this time in American History?

Let me first speak to the second questions. I would answer with the question: Should there be any predominantly White institutions in the 1980's? If the questioner is implying that any school which has a predominantly one-race student body is bad, then the nation must begin closing all of those highly funded, extremely cherished public and private institutions that have excluded black people for most of the existence; and which, as a consequence of overt and covert racial discrimination - as a national policy - operate - even today - nearly 100% white. The question is, in my judgment, a non question. With respect to the other questions permit me to offer the following response:

The mission and plan for Fisk University always have been to educate and train young men and women; particularly, those descendants, sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of former slaves; to bridge the chasm between dependence and independence for the educationally disinherited; to tend toward the development of a comprehensive university; and to maintain a strong liberal arts program - with appropriate research - without apology. Fisk has taught Greek, Latin, History, Mathematics, Religion, Rhetoric, Morals, Music, Writing, Natural Science, Philosophy, Romance Languages and Literature, English and Economics to people who had been dubbed "drawers of water and hewers of wood," Fisk has maintained its tradition of liberal learning.
At Fisk a liberal education is not designed only to prepare students for the jobs of today, but also for the challenges of tomorrow. An understanding and appreciation of the relationship between fields of knowledge brings a confidence in man's ability to alter and illuminate the directions of civilization. At Fisk, we believe that wide knowledge liberates and inspires; that inquiry is the apotheosis of freedom, the very heart of the true university. What connects the realm of English or Philosophy to that of Chemistry or Biology? Physics to History? Economics with Ecology? What does Plato's Athens offer to the insights of contemporary psychology. In such connections lies the differences between technical training and a liberal education, and in them lies also the key to self-confidence and humane understanding. At Fisk, we are convinced that students must be assisted in discovering and strengthening their talents such that they can relate those talents to the problems, frustrations and achievements to the human race through an informed and creative involvement in national and world affairs.

Fisk was caught up—from the day of its founding—in the events of the world. It had to be concerned about educating a cadre of gentlemen and gentlewomen who would be the schoolmasters, ministers, keepers of Black history and culture, learned-clergy and religious leaders of an abused, deprived but proud and future-looking people. Fisk had to become, and remain, one of the America's most democratic institutions.

In fine, Mr. Chairman, the Institution simply cannot depend on the efforts of one person—or a few people—to carry this huge burden. There must be a team effort of Administration, Board of Trustees, Alumni, Faculty, Parents, Students, Staff and Friends. While I do not have a full record of 1965-1977, the burden of fundraising between 1977 and 1983 has been left, almost totally, as another one of the complex problems facing the President. The School is too important to this nation's future for there to be any debate about supporting its survival and growth. The only recourse for Fisk is a significant infusion of new capital. Any other course, scheme or direction would, in my opinion, have the effect and silence of hope unborn.

When I left the confines of Harvard University to assume the presidency of Fisk University, many friends helped to make the transition comfortable. Their actions were out of friendship and out of the conviction and understanding of the pervasive need for equal access to educational opportunities for all youth of this nation. It was, and is, clear that too many of the young Black men and women of America are getting much less than their fair share
of the country's educational resources. I remain convinced of the necessity of maintaining an institution with the heritage, history, legacy and potential future of a Fisk University.

As we leave Fisk University, we shall seek ways by which many important and substantive things, about which we have concerns, can be addressed. We shall continue our efforts toward acquainting the world with the abundant evidence of continuing quality of, and appreciation for, Our Schools. The placement of our graduates indicates that our teaching programs continue to get desired results. I believe our success is due to the fact that our students are secure in a more than one century-old tradition of achievement by Black people, stimulated by the high expectations of administrators and examples of many teachers and enriched by programs which have been devised to meet their needs and interests. Students at Our Schools enjoy an environment that encourages them to fulfill their potential; one that prepares them to serve and enrich the society of which they are part. The value of our historically Black Colleges and Universities is beyond debate.

Respectfully submitted:

Walter J. Leonard, President
FISK UNIVERSITY
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REPORTS


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