EMS-0436.005.009.0087

The worse crime the white man
committed has been to teach us
to hate ourselves.
-Malcolm X

Purpose

The Afro-American Studies Program does not exist in a vacuum, isolated from the problems that give birth to it, and the problems which Afro-Americans are confronted with in America are numerous and varied. There are so many problems that it would be impossible to enumerate them; broadly, however, we might say that the problems are psychological, political, and continue to suffer, from psychological, political, and economic exploitation. We are aware that the educational institution, either by design or by an equally insidious ignorance, has served not merely as perpetuator, but as apologist for this exploitation, indeed, has been chief devil's advocate of that defendant who wears a judge's cloak - America. Our attempt, then, is to correct the institution in this regard, such that it speaks to the problems, and therefore to the needs, of Afro-Americans.

The problem, then, is that we are not free, economically, politically, or psychologically. It makes no difference here whether we talk about individual or collective freedom; we are not free as a people, and so we are not free as individual people. In this sense, what is done to the whole is done to all (each of) its parts. The educational institution as it exists today either omits or distorts the very existence of the Afro-American. If it is so inadequate, then it is up to us to make it adequate, since others apparently do not consider it in their interest to do so. It is our wish to bring into proper perspective the position of the Afro-American in American Society, and in so doing, to help achieve the liberation of our people.

Some Specifics -

(1) To enable Afro-Americans to actualize their potentialities in all areas, including those political, economic, social, and psychological, and to encourage each individual to use his talents for the improvement of the Afro-American community.

(2) Since the traditional academic content has been artificial, dehumanizing, and destructive, in other words, has not been designed with the Afro-American in mind (if with anybody in mind), we propose to create a learning experience which helps to develop the critical faculties and to provide a warm situation, supportive of the emotional, psychological, and intellectual growth of Afro-Americans.

(3) To provide the opportunity to understand the forces that constitute the Afro-American experience, and to focus upon the particular problems which afflict the Afro-American communities in the United States.

(4) To understand the cultural, political, economic, and social development of Black Peoples throughout the world.

(5) To stimulate and encourage the Afro-American artistic expression.

(6) In general, we want to promote cultural values which do not perpetuate the psychological difficulties that abound in Afro-America. We want to release the Afro-American spirit, not to further enchain it; we want to help build the spirit, not to break it; we want people to come to whatever it is that they are, not to what we think they ought to be.