Index and Introduction to

The Microfilmed

New York African-American Institute, Founding Committee Papers

(one roll)

Part of

The Buffalo Afro-American Collection
A joint project of
The Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier Inc.
and
Buffalo State College

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The Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library and
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The Monroe Fordham Regional History Center
Buffalo State College

The 16MM film was filmed with a 34X lens
New York African-American Institute, Founding Committee Papers

The New York African American Institute was initiated under SUNY Chancellor Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. The Chancellor appointed a planning committee made up of Drs. Monroe Fordham (Chair), Ena Farley, Ralph Watkins, Ken Hall, and Mr. Rudy Johnson to design and write a rational for the Institute to be presented to the New York State Legislature for funding. The committee worked during the first four months of 1986, meeting in Albany for two days each week to prepare their recommendations. The papers in this collection are the records of that planning committee.

TO: State University Board of Trustees
FROM: Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., Chancellor
SUBJECT: The Establishment of The New York African Institute
DATE: May 19, 1986

The 1986-87 State University Budget has an allocation of $340,000 for The New York African American Institute. This marks the culmination of efforts during the past several years to include funds in the State Budget to establish a Statewide, research-oriented Institute on African American concerns. Last year the State University allocated $50,000 from the organized research budget as a planning grant to prepare a report with recommendations for establishing and operationalizing the Institute. I then established a Planning Committee which met several times and consulted with various constituencies within and outside the University.

The broad conceptual design and operation of the Institute will be somewhat similar to that of The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. There will be a small administrative staff consisting of a Director, Assistant to the Director, and a Senior Stenographer. A Board of Advisors will provide broad policy decisions, and task forces of experts will advise the Director on specific areas of activity. The activities of the Institute will include contract research, support for fellows and graduate student Interns, faculty summer research grants, publications and sponsorship of conferences, seminars, and meetings of scholars, program administrators, legislators, and policy makers.

You will recall that this item was included in the Board of Trustees’ original budget request for 1986-87 and therefore will not require any formal action. However, given the importance of this new initiative, I believe an opportunity to share the latest developments with you is in order.

Attached for your information is the March 1986 Report of the Planning Committee of The New York African American Institute and a copy of the proposed budget for 1986-87. There will be a brief presentation by Vice Chancellor Sherry H. Penney, Interim Director Monroe Fordham, and Assistant Vice Chancellor Kenneth O. Hall on Wednesday morning, May 28.

Attachments (2)
The New York African American Institute of The State University of New York

Report of the Planning Committee

MEMBERS

Ena Farley, Chairperson
African American Studies
State College at Brockport

Monroe Fordham, Chairman
History & Social Studies
State College at Buffalo
(Interim Director, N.Y. African American Institute)

Kenneth Hall, Asst. Vice Chancellor
For Academic Programs
SUNY Central Administration

Rudy Johnson, Special Projects
Editor
University Affairs
SUNY Central Administration

Ralph Watkins, Chairman
Black & Hispanic Studies
State College at Oneonta

March 1986
THE NEW YORK AFRICAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE

Statement of Rational

New York has long been a state that has committed its vast array or social, economic, cultural and human resources to the spiritual and material uplift of all its citizens. Historically, these beneficiaries of a progressive state have included the "huddled masses" who flocked to these shores in search of opportunity and in flight from political and economic oppression, as well as the Involuntary Immigrants who were forced here from Africa as slaves.

Just as New York has become a portal of opportunity for many from beyond the nation's borders, the state over the years has become a gateway to progress for many from within—including the American descendants of the African slaves.

Still, in New York, as elsewhere, the road often has not been smooth, particularly for African Americans. The traditional pathways to progress have become strewn with obstacles: the manufacturing jobs that once sustained the masses are declining, as are the educational systems that should be (but are not sufficiently) developing skills to meet the newer, more demanding types of employment. Too many families, many of them lacking adult males, have become trapped in welfare programs, not to mention their virtual imprisonment in substandard housing in communities suffering from constant erosion. And young African Americans, many rendered socially and economically unproductive fall easily under the deadly influences of crime, substance abuse and unplanned child-bearing, thus becoming collectively one of the state's pressing concerns.

These and other problems make it increasingly clear that New York must pay careful (and caring) attention to the needs of its African American community, and in the process, develop the Intellectual as well as physical resources for doing so. It is vital. One important step in that direction will be the development of a research Institute designed to harness the widest range of intellectual resources on the broad physical needs of African Americans in New York.

Background

During the past decade or so, university officials have become acutely conscious of the opportunities and advantages that can result from re-directing some of their resources, technical services, and expertise to address problems and concerns of the communities in their state or region. Many universities have even added to their mission statements sections on "Urban Commitment" and "Community Service." Academic departments and disciplines within the university have attempted through their programs, curricula, and faculty reward system to bring their expertise to bear on social and economic problems that affect their state or region.

This process, in which the university has begun to reassess its role and responsibilities in serving the public, has resulted in many new and innovative academic programs that have proven beneficial to the student, the community, and the university. Moreover, faculty members have become involved in research projects that are challenging and satisfying, and also functional in addressing community problems or needs. The university, while providing important services to
government, public agencies, and the community at large, has also enhanced its image and status in the public mind.

The need for scholars in the areas of African American studies to be involved in research projects that have functional value has long been recognized as being important. In fact, African American Studies programs were designed to initiate "relevant" research and scholarship. Unfortunately, due to declining support within the university and numerous other factors, the promise has been only partially realized.

The Interdisciplinary nature of African American Studies offers an excellent opportunity for scholars from diverse academic orientations to address issues and topics from a common subject area. An Institute that sponsors and coordinates research and other activities could serve to stimulate academic research and scholarly activity among those faculty members specializing in African American Studies and related topics. Such academic expertise represents a natural resource that should be more fully used to address (and hopefully redress) the problems and concerns of African American and inner-city communities in the state.

During the past several years, a number of efforts have been made to include money in the state budget to establish a state-wide, research-oriented institute on African American concerns. (There are already several precedents, in other subject areas, for such an institute.) Generally, the efforts to establish such a structure were premised on the recognition of a need for a research and information base to assist public officials, service agencies, and others involved with the development and implementation of policies and programs that address the problems and concerns of African American and inner-city communities in the state.

Early in the 1985-86 budget year, the State University of New York Central Administration set aside a sum of money to be used as a planning grant to prepare a report with recommendations for establishing and operationalizing an African American Institute. An interim director and advisory board were appointed by the Chancellor to coordinate the planning phase and prepare a report outlining the body to be known as The New York African American Institute.

Planning Phase

During the planning phase for The SUNY New York African American Institute, the interim director and advisory board met with officials from SUNY Central Administration, representative New York State elected officials, faculty members from African American Studies programs, and representatives from agencies that provide services to the African American and inner-city communities. Meetings were also held with resource groups from four important topical areas: (1) education, (2) African American Studies, (3) Health services, and (4) community development. The purpose of those meetings was to gather suggestions and other information which would be useful in designing the Institute and in formulating recommendations for making it operational. Many of the ideas and suggestions from those meetings have been incorporated into this report.
The planning phase ended on March 31, 1986, and action began immediately to make the Institute operational. Such action should include the establishment of the advisory board, naming of a full time director, and the appointment of task force groups. Ideally the Institute should begin its official operations on or as soon after April 1, 1986, as possible.

About The SUNY New York African American Institute

The SUNY New York State African American Institute will serve as a SUNY-wide Institute to initiate, conduct, and coordinate applied and historical research on American Issues with special relevance to New York State. The Institute will be housed in the Rockefeller Institute in Albany, and at the State University of New York at Albany. The research studies and activities sponsored by the Institute will be used to enhance policy decisions within New York State Government and to strengthen the teaching of African American Studies in SUNY and throughout the State of New York.

The general purposes of the Institute are as follows: to conduct and provide research and technical expertise to the Executive and Legislative branches of New York State Government on problems and Issues of concern to the New York African American community and to facilitate the formulation of appropriate governmental responses to Issues including health care, education, economic development, Income distribution, and criminal Justice; to sponsor, conduct, and publish research on African Americans in New York State that can serve as educational tools for all New Yorkers; to convene meetings of scholars, program administrators, policy makers, and others with special expertise to address questions, Issues, and topics of special concern to African Americans in New York State; to support Senior Fellows and Student Interns who will conduct appropriate research studies; to sponsor lectures at the various SUNY campuses on topical issues of importance to African Americans in New York State; to provide a clearinghouse for research conducted within SUNY and elsewhere which has public policy Implications for African Americans in New York State.

Operation of the Institute

The Institute will be guided by an Advisory Board appointed by the Chancellor of the State University. The membership of the Board will include University officers, scholars, governmental; officials, and community leaders experienced in the concerns of the Institute. The Board shall advise Institute staff on areas of critical Importance.

A director, appointed by the Chancellor of the State University, will administer the Institute. The director will organize Institute research efforts; direct the work of the Fellows, Interns, and Task Force Groups; promote through research findings the instructional strength of Afro-American studies on SUNY campuses; and build the financial foundation of the Institute.

FUNDING FOR THE INSTITUTE

The Institute and its core activities should be funded from State appropriations for basic operations. Including the administrative staff, travel, equipment and topical research and other services. However, it is assumed that external funding will become an important element in
supplementing the State resources. We believe that, as the reputation of the Institute becomes established. It will be able to attract grants, research contracts and funding from both public and private sources. Those resources will enable the Institute to provide the specialized services which will be a part of its mission. Furthermore, the Institute will draw upon all of the resources of the SUNY system, as well as relevant State agencies, community organizations and other research institutes.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Advisory Board

The members of the advisory board shall be appointed by the Chancellor of the State University of New York. That body shall be responsible for establishing the broad policies that will govern the operation of the Institute. The Chancellor or his designee will serve as chairman of the board. This board will carry out broad responsibilities such as: (1) Review and approval of the work program of the Institute; (2) Recommend areas for investigation; (3) Establish the priorities for projects to be undertaken; (4) Identify sources of funding; and (5) Promote the activities of the Institute in their respective constituencies. The board will convene at least once each year.

Task Force Groups

Much of the initial work and activity of the Institute will involve research and programs that address issues, topics, and problems in one or more of four areas: (1) education, (2) health services, (3) community development, and (4) African American Studies (Including subjects in the humanities and the arts). To facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Institute's programs and activities in the above areas, we propose that a task force group be established for each area.

Each task force group should be composed of ten to fifteen dedicated persons who are knowledgeable in the particular area and are qualified by academic training and/or experience in the particular field. An effort should be made to insure that scholars/researchers, as well as persons with experience in the administration of programs in the subject area be included in each task force group. The group should bear the names of both the Institute and the subject area, i.e., "The New York African American Institute's Task Force on (subject area)."

We recommend that the task force groups be proposed by the director and reviewed by the advisory board. Members of the groups should be appointed by the director for specified terms. Although it is recommended that four standing task force groups be appointed initially, the director may find it necessary to create specialized ad hoc task force groups from time to time to address special problems. Moreover, two or more standing task force groups (or selected members therefrom), may be asked to work together in addressing a problem or issue that overlaps several areas.

Each task force group should meet with the director on a quarterly basis (more or less depending on need). Small working committees of each task force group may find it necessary
to meet more frequently. Travel support should be built into the budget to cover the needs of the task force groups.

Duties and Responsibilities of Task Force Groups:

1. Work with the director in planning research projects, programs, and activities for the respective subject areas.

2. Assist the director in the implementation of programs, projects, and other activities in the respective subject areas.

3. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the Institute's programs, projects, and other activities in the respective subject areas.

4. Assist in the evaluation of subject-area manuscripts that are being considered for publication by the Institute.

5. Assist in the evaluation of projects and proposals that are being considered for funding or endorsement by the Institute.

6. Assist in the gathering and evaluation of material for inclusion in the Institute's newsletter.

7. Provide advice and counsel to the Institute's director and advisory board on matters pertaining to the particular subject area.

REVIEW PROCESS

The Institute will have a process to review and select projects. Sponsored publications, student and faculty research grants, and topical research projects will all be chosen on the basis of a review that will result in the approval of some proposals and the rejection of others. In order to insure that logical and defensible decisions are made, we recommend the adoption of the following review process: all publications and research projects which are funded by the Institute shall be reviewed by a panel made up of at least five members drawn from the task force groups. The director will distribute copies of proposals to be reviewed to the designated members of the panel (The director should develop a rating and review form for this process). The review panel should respond with written recommendations. While final responsibility and accountability should reside with the director, the review panel recommendations will figure prominently in the process.

SPONSORED PROGRAMS

The diversity of the Institute's stated purposes and goals dictate a need to employ a variety of programs in the pursuit of the overall mission. We propose the following as standard programs for sponsorship by the Institute:
Symposia on Public Issues and Concerns

From time to time the Institute should convene specialists to examine and discuss a specific public issue/concern from a topical area such as economic development, education, employment, housing, environment, human services, mental health, law and justice, civil rights, transportation, or the arts. Some topics should be addressed by persons from Inter-disciplinary perspectives, while others might be more appropriately examined by specialists from a single discipline. During those sessions, those with specialized training or expertise in the designated area will present papers or position statements on the particular topic. Such sessions should generate thought and discussion among specialists on a designated topic or issue. At the conclusion of the sessions, the body should adopt recommendations or resolutions designed to clarify an issue or provide guidance to policy makers, program administrators, and others with responsibilities for addressing the topic or issue in question.

Depending on the nature and content of the symposia, the Institute may wish to publish the formal papers as part of its series of special publications. The resolutions and recommendations from such sessions may be appropriate for publication in the Institute's newsletter.

Research Projects

Through its research function, the Institute can provide a valuable service to governmental and public agencies that are attempting to address difficult and complex social problems and issues facing the African American and inner-city communities in New York State. Moreover, the research function will enable the Institute to contribute to the development of new knowledge, and the re-interpretation of existing sources, in African American Studies. As a minimum, we propose that the Institute sponsor three kinds of research projects: (1) research projects that pertain to "task force" area subjects. (2) faculty summer research projects, and (3) contract research.

Research Grants for Task Force Areas

The Institute should target some of its resources for research projects that address issues or topics that are identified by the task force groups. The Director should work with the task force groups in identifying the topics that need to be examined.

The Institute could either publicize the topics and ask scholars to submit research proposals for addressing those topics; or it could simply choose to provide support for ongoing projects that have already been identified and are in need of assistance in order to be completed.

Faculty Summer Research Grants

As part of its effort to encourage research and scholarship among scholars and specialists in New York State in the various areas of African American Studies, we propose that the Institute offer faculty summer grants to support research projects in subjects that fall within the purview of African American Studies.
Contract Research

A committee will be appointed to identify and develop procedures and contract research to be undertaken by the Institute. This research would be managed by the Research Foundation. A consultant list of experts within SUNY and throughout the State would undertake specific research on behalf of State agencies such as Health, Social Welfare, Labor, and others.

Publications

During the planning phase for the Institute, meetings were held with resource groups from education, African American Studies, health services, and community development. While each group had its own set of priorities and concerns, each was virtually unanimous in recommending that the Institute provide vehicles for the publication and dissemination of the results of sponsored research. Such publications will enable the Institute to place that important information into the hands of educators, policy makers, administrators, public officials, libraries, the news media, and others who are in a position to use the information in ways that impact on the community. Toward the pursuit of those ends, we propose that the Institute; (1) publish an official, regularly issued newsletter, (2) issue special publications, and (3) make arrangements for guaranteed access to the scholarly journal Afro-Americans in New York Life and History.

Newsletter

The establishment of an official newsletter should be at the very top of the Institute's list of priorities during its first year of operation. That newsletter should be sent to members of every constituent group whose activities have an impact on African Americans in New York State. The newsletter should also be sent to agencies, Institutions, and other entities that provide services to African American communities in New York State. Time and care should be spent in developing the data base of newsletter recipients. The newsletter should have the widest possible distribution.

The content of the newsletter should include reports from the four standing task force groups. It should also contain news items on research findings, trends, issues, new programs, and other pertinent information from the four task force subject areas. The Institute should also use the newsletter to announce sponsored projects and programs.

Special Publications

From time to time the Institute may feel the need to issue publications that emanate from special sponsored projects and collections of materials such as the following; symposia that focus on issues and specialized topics, selected bibliographies, guides to research source material, and aids to assist teachers in incorporating African American Studies into curriculum materials. Such materials should be published as part of the series to be entitled, Publications of the SUNY New York African American Institute. Publications in that series should be issued on an occasional, as-needed basis and should be distributed to select targeted audiences.
Scholarly Interdisciplinary Journal

One of the objectives of the Institute, especially the task force on African American Studies, will be to provide the kind of support and incentives that will lead to increased research activity among scholars in African American Studies. Ideally the Institute should sponsor a certain number of research projects that will lead to scholarly analysis of problems and issues at the local community level. Those sponsored research projects should generate scholarly articles that pertain specifically to the life and history of African Americans in New York State.

One of the most important incentives that can be offered in generating such studies is to offer some assurance to the author that his work, if it is well done and contributes to the discipline, will have a better than average chance of being published. To provide that level of assurance, the Institute has two options: (1) launch its own interdisciplinary scholarly periodical, or (2) gain guaranteed access to a published periodical that already exists. In this instance we recommend the latter approach.

The costs of launching a new periodical are high. Moreover, the process of building a good support base of subscribers takes a great deal of time and effort. An interdisciplinary journal already exists which might prove ideal as a vehicle for articles generated by the Institute on subjects pertaining to African Americans in New York State. *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* has been published regularly for ten years. It is published by the Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Inc., a not-for-profit organization chartered by the New York State Department of Education. That organization should be contacted regarding the feasibility of an arrangement which would result in the Institute gaining regular and guaranteed access to *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*.

Other Programs

Annual Conference for Sponsored Research

Each year the Institute should sponsor a conference in which all of the recipients of the Institute’s various research grants will be asked to present papers on their research project. (There should be a special session for student papers.) Ideally these annual gatherings should be held on a different SUNY campus.

Computerized Data Base In Subject Areas

The Institute should acquire access to a computerized data base for the subject areas covered by the Institute’s mission. Such a data base would enable the Institute to respond to requests from researcher aid service agencies who need assistance in identifying and locating source materials on a particular subject.

Directory of Scholars

The Institute should compile and maintain a directory of scholars in New York State who are specialists in African American Studies or related areas.
Institute Fellows

We recommend that appropriate categories, such as "research fellowships," be established which will enable scholars, researchers, students, and others to be officially attached to the Institute during their involvement with specific projects. Such categories should include: (1) research fellowships (persons involved with research projects that are sponsored or endorsed by the Institute), (2) Institute fellowships (persons working directly with the Institute's task force groups), and (3) student fellowships (students involved with sponsored research projects).

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND THE INSTITUTE

As part of its effort to inform the public about its services, activities, and accomplishments, and in order to maximize its overall impact, the Institute should devote energy and resources to the establishment of a public information component. In this information society, the "public information" function is vital to almost any body of any appreciable size. Thus, The New York African American Institute must not only heed this contemporary fact of life, but may also need to pay it extraordinary attention.

The Institute is a creature of the public, or at least its agency—SUNY, and exists to benefit the public. The Institute will need, then, to keep the public informed about its services and accomplishments as part of its effort to gain credibility and public confidence.

This suggests the need for the establishment of a regularly published newsletter—even at the Institute's organizational stage, perhaps especially so. The publication should be aimed first at those inclined to participate in the work of the Institute, as well as those most likely to be direct beneficiaries of its various services. Eventually the targeted readership should be expanded to include all of the persons and agencies whose actions and decisions have a direct impact on African Americans in New York State.

In addition to a newsletter, the Institute should make extensive use of news releases. For instance, a news release should be prepared for every major meeting or event sponsored by the Institute. This should be done even if the press is not invited and the news release is not generally distributed. Such a practice not only keeps the group prepared for the press, but the release also serves to summarize the event or activity, so that all participants form a clear picture of the proceedings. The news releases will also aid in the formulation of succinct public announcements of the affairs of the Institute. In addition, collectively, the news releases will compose an historical profile of the organization from inception.

Finally, we propose that the Institute establish a committee on public information. That committee should include at least one information-media specialist.
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