

BLACK,
WHITE,
Mennonite:

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS
AT GOSHEN COLLEGE,
1968-1983

BY DOMINIQUE BURGUNDER-JOHNSON



John Beard and Francis Griffith, as pictured in the 1975 *Maple Leaf*.

cover: Adrian Powell

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P R E F A C E

Dominique eloquently tells the historical story of African American students at Goshen College. Her paper speaks truth about the experience of African American students over several decades at Goshen College, identifies efforts to combat racism, and exposes the reality of dominance that has remained in our society.

Goshen College is trying to develop to become more like Jesus (Eph. 4:15 “by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way in Christ, who is the head. Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together...”). We recognize the kind of love that Jesus models, but our humanity so often falls short of exhibiting the same love for others—with symptoms such as racism within individuals, racism embedded in our institutional behaviors, and favoring/privileging one race over another.

The Multicultural Affairs Committee is committed to continuing to host anti-racist education and training events at Goshen College. This is only one of the efforts to accomplish the goals put forth in the working Diversity Plan (2004-2010) that states, “The racial/ethnic diversity plan is an extension of Goshen College’s core values and strategic plan and is congruent with the mission and goals of the college.” The diversity plan is the college’s response to addressing the previously stated challenges that hinder our progress in achieving equity at every level in the institution. In addition, a major grant of \$12.5 million from Lily Endowment, Inc. has given Goshen College the unique opportunity to establish a Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning (CITL). We believe that this grant will enable Goshen College to become a leader in understanding how small liberal arts colleges can best serve the educational needs of rapidly increasing Latino immigrant populations. The college expects that what is learned from implementing this grant will better enable us to also enroll and retain other students of color. Finally, I envision that

4 an institutional “cultural audit” beginning in the fall of 2009 will also move Goshen College closer to radical counter-cultural kingdom values.

We know how Jesus lived and are heirs to the Christian tradition, as well as the Anabaptist stream that acknowledges the importance of a community of believers helping us to be faithful, intentional peacemakers. Dominique’s research gives voice to challenges faced by minority students in their journeys at Goshen College. It is my hope that the compelling stories will help us learn from our past and provide hope for the future.

Odelet Nance

Multicultural Affairs Director

Goshen College

FOREWORD

My motivations for researching the history of African American students at Goshen College were entirely selfish. Okay, maybe not entirely selfish. There were two parts to my research interest: 1.) To confirm that I was not the only person questioning whether I as a--religious, cultural, racial and ethnic--minority had a place on Goshen's campus, and 2.) To confirm for the minorities of Goshen's past, present, and future that they were and are not alone in questioning their place within the institution.

It was only as I began to give presentations on my research that I considered how it might be of interest or use to the "majority" of Goshen College. Beyond acting as a historical resource, this paper brings questions to the surface that all members of the Goshen College community still have the opportunity to answer.

Though this paper focuses on the experience of African American students at Goshen during a specific historical period, I do hope that its message can be understood and applied beyond the boundaries of "Black, White, Mennonite," and even beyond the confines of Goshen College.

I see this "historical" paper as merely exposition. My hope is that readers will feel inspired to move the story forward, bringing the narrative to its climax.

A million thanks to the paper's primary editors – Steve Nolt, Jan Bender Shetler, Hilary Mayhew, Bobby Meyer-Lee, Ann Hostetler, and Hope Langeland – who have gone above and beyond to help this history become a part of Goshen College's and the Mennonite Church's story.

I dedicate this work to the individuals that were interviewed for this paper. It was such an enormous blessing to connect with each of you. Thanks for sharing your stories with me and confirming that we are--indeed – all in this together!

INTRODUCTION

Seeking to more fully exemplify the spirit and practice of Christ, the radical reformers of the 16th-century Anabaptist movement broke with the state church to establish a church based on their reading of the New Testament. Born out of this movement, the Mennonite Church saw its mission as one that would resist the ways of the dominant culture in order to remain faithful to Christ's teachings in the New Testament. As theologian Hubert Brown summarized, Mennonites believed that "complete conformity to Christ and complete nonconformity to the world" were essential to living out the Word of God.¹

Centuries later, as many Mennonites immigrated to North America, the Mennonite church began embodying its mission of nonconformity by resisting the dominant culture's mistreatment of and discrimination against African Americans.² As an initial expression, some Mennonites of the 18th and early 19th centuries chose not to own slaves.³ In the decades that followed, the church became more proactive in its resistance by seeking ways to include African Americans in its membership. Baptizing its first black members in 1897,⁴ by 1946 the church ordained its first black minister.⁵ Also during the 1940s, Mennonites began initiating churches and urban ministry programs in cities and black communities throughout the United States.⁶ The early members of the North-American Mennonite Church who took part in this active resistance illustrated church historian Franklin Littell's notion that Anabaptists "meant just what they said, and their teaching is unimportant apart from the direct attempt to give it embodiment in actual groups living in history."⁷

Goshen College, as a Mennonite institution, has also sought to exemplify the church's mission of resistance to the dominant culture. In 1896, John S. Coffman, founder of the college's precursor, the

Elkhart Institute, stated his belief that a Mennonite college should adopt a “Spirit of Progress,” and be founded upon “operating principles counter to those of the world.”⁸ As Elkhart Institute evolved into Goshen College in 1903, Noah E. Byers, the college’s first President, echoed Coffman’s hopes for the institution to model “high Christian ideals and energetic progress.”⁹ Goshen eventually would name a commitment to diversity as a part of its institutional values and become nationally recognized for its continued expression of this commitment.¹⁰

Yet a troublesome fact lies in the shadows of Goshen College’s celebrated commitment to diversity. An often overlooked reality coexisting behind the college’s distinctive features—such as its Study-Service Term (SST), significant number of faculty who have lived or worked abroad, and 10 percent international students—is a disproportionately low number of North-American ethnic and racial minority students. In 2006, the total North-American minority student population of the college was a mere 7 percent.¹¹ Among the Native-American, Asian-Pacific, and Hispanic students who contributed to this percentage, African Americans made up little more than 3 percent of the total student body.¹²

Goshen College not only reflected a larger societal trend in its low percentage of African American students but also a trend that has been prevalent in the North-American Mennonite Church. In 1999, 76 percent of blacks enrolled at public, rather than private, postsecondary institutions,¹³ and in 2002, African Americans made up only 11.9 percent of all college students in the United States.¹⁴ The overwhelming demographic majority of the Mennonite Church in the United States, historically and currently, has been rural, white, and ethnically European. As described by Mennonite historian James Juhnke, “Mennonites are an acculturating religious minority who have gradually taken on the characteristics of their American social and political environment.”¹⁵ These historical and contemporary demographics are so prevalent that

∞ the term “Mennonite” is often used interchangeably to refer to both a religious denomination and an ethnic group with a Swiss, German, or Russian immigrant heritage and historical ties to the 16th-century Anabaptist movement in Europe. Recounting his experience as an African American in the Mennonite Church, Hubert Brown said, “I have experienced a feeling that Anabaptism has been made so biological and so ethnic that persons like myself hardly know whether or not we should inquire or if in fact the territory is open for us to occupy.”¹⁶

As an institution designed to convey the Mennonite Church’s mission of resistance to the mainstream, and with an expressed commitment to diversity, Goshen College has a responsibility to recruit and retain a larger number of African Americans. The evidence of Goshen’s alignment with the wide-scale North-American and Mennonite demographics could be explained as the institution simply falling “victim” to forces beyond its own control. Yet, it hardly seems excusable for an institution, whose principles are guided by the Mennonite Church’s practices of resistance and alternative modeling, to succumb to worldly standards rather than those identified by Christ. Building an inclusive community of “Jew and Greek,” as the apostle Paul asserted in the book of Galatians, was central to Christ’s message.¹⁷ In living out its Christ-centered core value, Goshen College is called to build a college community that is not afraid to pull down its socio-cultural barriers erected in the name of maintaining its theological standards.

The following historical analysis of Goshen’s high period of African American student enrollment, from 1968 to 1983, reveals that recruitment and retention of African Americans depended on the institution’s willingness to let down some of these barriers to create a more inclusive community. This conclusion suggests that while the college expressed, and in some ways displayed, a desire to welcome more African American students, it was unwilling to push the limits of its socio-cultural barriers, and thus show a full institutional commitment

to the diversity rhetoric it presented to the public. With this unwillingness, Goshen fell short of the institution's and the Mennonite Church's mission to transform rather than conform to national trends. A sustained increase in African American students may have been obtained if, through its actions, the college had shown its resistance to the desire to conform to the dominant culture and was defined rather by the founding principle of the Anabaptists: to more fully practice the spirit and teachings of Christ.

10 1943-1965: FIRST YEARS OF BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Goshen enrolled its first African Americans long after other white colleges in the U.S. In 1834, Oberlin was the first college in the west to enroll African Americans.¹⁸ Over a century later, Goshen enrolled its first African American students, and in 1943, Juanita Lark, daughter of the Mennonite Church's first black minister, became the college's first African American graduate.¹⁹ In the decade that followed, less than a handful of black students enrolled at Goshen.²⁰

As the mid-20th-century U.S. Civil Rights Movement increased the visibility of blacks and stimulated national conversation around race relations, Goshen began to give more attention to national realities. Goshen's formal campus appearance at the 1955 Mennonite Church-sponsored "Christian Race Relations" conference displayed the Movement's early influence.²¹ Other events that raised campus awareness about the race realities included a performance of *Cry the Beloved Country*,²² a Youth Forum discussion on "Integration: Attitudes and Actions," a Peace Society trip to Chicago to observe segregation and urban conditions, a protest against Alabama Governor George Wallace's criticisms of the Civil Rights Bill, and a visit in 1964 by John Howard Griffin, author of *Black Like Me*.²³ Prominent African American visitors to the campus included singer Marion Anderson;²⁴ president of the National Council of Churches, Dr. Samuel Proctor; and Mennonite-affiliated civil rights leader, Dr. Vincent Harding.²⁵ The most noted guest of the time, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., presented a lecture at the college in 1960.²⁶

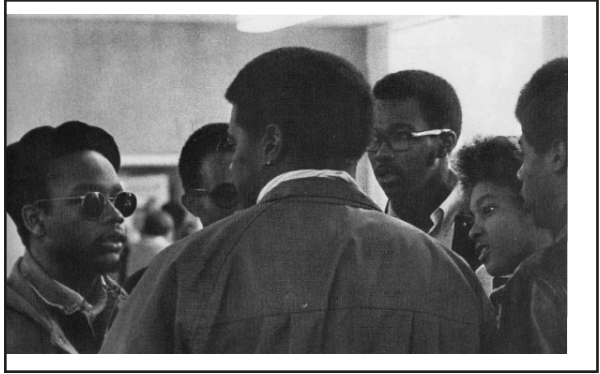
Intensifying national events and federal policies passed in response to the Civil Rights Movement pressured Goshen, and colleges everywhere, to actively recruit black students. In 1964, when universi-

ties nationwide implemented affirmative action in their admission policies,²⁷ Goshen College President Paul Minerger stated that the college should offer education to young people from “various racial groups.”²⁸ Goshen administrator J. B. Shenk echoed this sentiment, expressing the institution’s desire to raise black student enrollment to 5 percent.²⁹ In response to this communicated vision, representatives of the college went to urban areas and Mennonite churches in the Midwest and East, as well as to local area high schools, to recruit minority students.³⁰

The success of intentional recruiting efforts across the country resulted in a national increase in African American postsecondary enrollment, also evidenced in Goshen’s diversifying student demographics. By the mid-1960s, African American undergraduates made up 6.5 percent of all college students in the United States, marking the beginning of a large-scale entry of black students into white universities.³¹ The number of African American students attending Goshen reached a dozen, doubling the numbers of previous years.³² Throughout the decade this number continued to increase at the college, peaking in 1971, with sixty-four African American students representing over 5 percent of the total student population.³³ Though not significantly different from national numbers, Goshen enrolled a considerably higher number of black students than the other Mennonite colleges.³⁴

12 LATE 1960s - EARLY 1970s: INCREASE IN BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Through the significant increase in African American student enrollment, Goshen brought together on its campus two social groups between which there had been little previous interaction. The vast majority of black students,



Pictured in the 1970 *Maple Leaf*: Adrian Powell, Herman Douglas, Chuck Green, Oliver Hardaway, Portia Gadson, Cal Robinson.

arriving from lower socioeconomic, non-Mennonite, and insulated communities in the inner city, met the very different experience and ethos of Goshen's majority white, middle-class, rural, ethnically Mennonite culture. Having grown up in Southside Chicago, African American alumnus Arvis Dawson said he came to rural Goshen during the late 1960s "straight up out the ghetto."³⁵ Another black student from Southside Chicago, Everette Ersery, remembered being the first black person to whom his first-year roommate had ever spoken.³⁶

While the success in enrollment numbers evidenced a commitment to recruiting more African American students, it did not force Goshen College to consider what this change in student demographics would mean for the institution. Goshen was not unlike many other white universities at the time, which, as historian Allen Ballard in *The Education of Black Folk* says, "expected that the mere admission would show their goodwill, and made efforts to carry on business as usual."³⁷ Tony Brown, as an African American Goshen College student during

the late 1960s and early 1970s, sensed that not only students but also some white faculty seemed “inconvenienced” or “frightened” by the large number of black students that had entered the campus.³⁸ Ray Funk, a white Goshen student, concluded that Mennonites awakened by the Civil Rights Movement were “jolted from our comfortable pews and isolated study-carrels...baffled on unknown ground.” Funk questioned whether the Mennonite community, with its qualifications on these issues limited to those derived from “the cornfields, sociology classes and MYF [Mennonite Youth Fellowship],”³⁹ would be able to provide answers to questions faced by the nation as a whole. Echoing this observation, Everette Ersery said, “I think they had good intentions, but they had no frame of reference for the support necessary, both academic and social, to succeed in this circumstance.”⁴⁰

Racism was one reality of a diversifying student body for which

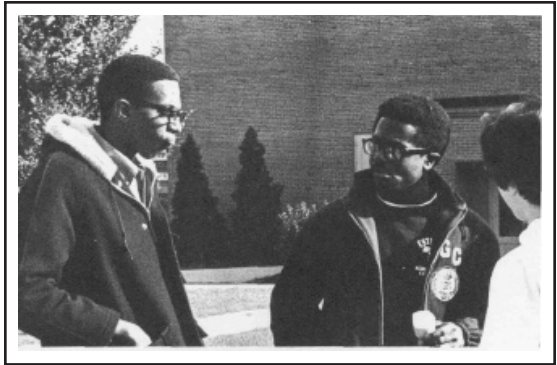


The BSU picture from the 1975 *Maple Leaf* – front: Ray Wentz, Rosemary Smart, Gloria Singleton; middle: Leamon Sowell, Debbie Blackwell, Jan Ingram, Brenda Rivers, David McKim; back: George Sharp, George Yoder, Art Griffin, Charles Boswell.

14 Goshen College was ill prepared. Many black students at Goshen, as shared in a 1968 article in the college's student newspaper, *The Record*, sensed a superficial friendliness.⁴¹ Everette Ersery said he felt a general atmosphere of "support and acceptance" toward black students. Yet, he added, even though many positive relationships existed between blacks and whites on campus, "an undercurrent of mistrust" in social settings was still present.⁴² Racism at Goshen also took more overt forms. In 1967, Adrian Powell, an African American student, posted several articles on the Goshen College "opinion board," saying he had been treated like an "animal" after asking several white women for dates.⁴³ Students in following years also said they encountered challenges on campus while being involved in interracial dating relationships.⁴⁴

Another unexpected circumstance Goshen and other previously all-white colleges across the country confronted were the challenges

black students faced in meeting the academic demands of these institutions. Ballard wrote that nothing had prepared black students entering white postsecondary institutions for "the rigor of thought and concentration that



Larry Brown, Pleas Broaddus, and Rosetta Savanick, as pictured in the 1968 *Maple Leaf*.

awaited them on the campus where they have been accepted as special-admissions students."⁴⁵ At Goshen, a 1971 *Record* article criticized the institution's evaluation system for catering to white standards.⁴⁶ Ersery felt that the academic challenges many African Americans at Goshen encountered only "exaggerated the separation between black and white students."⁴⁷

In a 1968 *Record* editorial, Dan Kauffman, a white Goshen

student, challenged campus student leadership organizations to hold the campus community accountable for addressing the racist reality both on campus and in the local community.⁴⁸ This same year, Goshen College administrator J. B. Shenk noted, “Active recruitment of blacks cannot help but make a difference in school policy [...] The school cannot ask this many people to come to campus without allowances for their cultural differences.”⁴⁹ Tony Brown remembered positively that the institution willingly gave black students the opportunity to use diplomatic channels to voice their perspective, put their concerns on the agenda, and engage in constructive dialogue.⁵⁰

Several individuals began to take active steps in response to some of the concerns resulting from the surge in black student enrollment at Goshen. In the days following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., students and faculty led a march to the Goshen courthouse, displaying their solidarity and sympathy for the tragedy.⁵¹ In 1968, one white student, Eli Hochstedler, hoped to challenge his own limited perspective by participating in a student exchange program between Goshen and historically black Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi.⁵² The Goshen College Student Senate in 1968 adopted the document “The Racial Crisis and Human Rights: A Statement of Position,” which formally recommended African American course material, black faculty members, and an increase in the percentage of black students. The document also established a student-faculty Human Rights Commission to examine and address issues of prejudice and discrimination on campus.⁵³ In 1970, the college held a student forum for all students to discuss their feelings about campus race relations. There were also individual white faculty members at the time, such as Vernon Schertz, who sought to build connections with black students and act as a bridge between the dichotomized groups on campus.⁵⁴

Not only individuals but also the administration took actions to respond to the new realities Goshen College faced. Initially the admin-

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istration created a subcommittee of the International Education Committee to address the interests of American minority students⁵⁵ and held an all-school Study Day centered on the topic of “Race Relations in America.”⁵⁶ In 1969, the Black Education Study Committee was created to evaluate the academic and social life of Goshen’s black students.⁵⁷ This same year, the institution hired Lee Roy Berry, the college’s first African American faculty member.⁵⁸

Reacting to feelings of isolation from their white peers on campus, black Goshen students formed solidarity groups. In 1968, Adrian Powell founded A.P., Inc (Adrian Powell, Inc.), one of the first organizations for black unity at Goshen. Powell said he created the organization to serve Elkhart County by addressing the concerns of the “New Negro Left,” a term defined by a leading member of the national Black Consciousness Movement, Stokely Carmichael. In the spring of 1968, black students met under the leadership of Goshen African American student Oliver Hardaway.⁵⁹ These gatherings eventually led to the creation of Goshen College’s Afro-American Society in 1969.⁶⁰ This organization was the precursor to the Goshen Black Student Union (BSU), launched in 1971. In a 1975 *Record* article, African American Goshen student Don Desaussure expressed the importance that black campus organizations such as BSU had for him, stating, “Without it I wouldn’t feel at home.”⁶¹

With a formally established group, African American students at Goshen voiced the sense of identity loss they experienced individually and collectively as a result of their minority status on campus. In a 1972 *Record* article, African American Goshen student Pleas Broaddus said the loss of his black identity was a direct result of being on a Mennonite campus, which “divorced a black from his own culture.”⁶²

As a student being taught only about the role of whites in history and society, Mildred Taylor-Myers, an African American student at Goshen in the 1970s, said she questioned if blacks had ever done any-

thing significant.⁶³ Students also criticized the lack of social activities and programs conducive to their own cultural values. Goshen's 1973 Black Student Union president, Greg Tate, said the lack of opportunity for social life on campus was the greatest problem for black Goshen students because it put them in danger of "social extinction."⁶⁴ Though it was tied to the Mennonite Church's prohibition against dancing, several students specifically identified the school's policy against dancing as, "depriving them of an inherent part of their cultural heritage."⁶⁵ Some black students found Goshen not only socially confining, but also spiritually confining. Arvis Dawson remembered black students often contesting chapel requirements because they were not directed at any of their interests. As Dawson summarized it, while Goshen did give black students a lot of freedom, it still held them in the realm of its



Howell House, as pictured in the 1973 *Maple Leaf*: Mark Beachy, Jerome Perry, Darrel Broaddus, Pattie Woodson (seated), Robert Bowman (standing), Shawn and Betty Beachy (floor), Alfreda McDowell, Stephanie Newsome (floor), Greg Tate (standing), Steve Cooper.

own expectations.⁶⁶

Some black students also expressed a frustration with the lack of effort their white peers and the administration put into trying to

∞ experience African American culture. Tony Brown felt that many black
7 students did a lot of the educating and took all the initiatives to raise
campus intercultural awareness.⁶⁷ In 1972, a controversy over the
exclusion of three black students from the SST program prompted a *Re-
cord* article challenging the principle that allowed white students, who
were unwilling to engage different cultures from their own on campus,
to participate in cross-cultural experiences abroad, while administra-
tors did not consider the three excluded black students well-suited for
the program. The article suggested that black students at Goshen were
forced into a constant “cross-cultural” immersion experience and con-
tended that the college should create opportunities for white students
to become more exposed, by immersion, to the “foreign” cultures on
their home campus.⁶⁸ Mildred Taylor-Myers said the college should
have done more “give and take,” not fully giving up its Mennonite iden-
tity but being open to embracing that of others.⁶⁹

Accompanying their criticisms, black Goshen students offered
specific recommendations to the college to better accommodate their
concerns. Students pointed to the need for courses in black history and
black culture, and for black faculty. In a 1975 manifesto, the African-
American Society stated a need for a Black Student Union paper, a
black library, a black art workshop, time on the campus radio station
for black music, office space, and an “Afro-house” to serve as black stu-
dent community housing.⁷⁰ Goshen needed to allow all its students to
“work within their identity,” as Taylor-Myers summarized it.⁷¹

Goshen College soon acknowledged the need for changes in
response to its diversifying student body. To heighten black cultural
awareness, black culture studies were added to the curriculum—
including African American Literature, African Arts, African Culture
and Society, Black Theology, and Black American History; a “soul hour”
was allowed on the college radio station; “Ebony Voices”—the college’s
first gospel choir—formed in 1970; a Black Arts focus was designated

for the Goshen College Study Week in 1971;⁷² and Howell House was established as “Black House” in 1972 for black students to live together in community housing. The following year, the Black Education Study Committee sponsored a nine-week “Human Relations Training Seminar” to promote interracial understanding on campus.⁷³ To respond to the academic needs of some black students, a tutorial program was organized, directed group study sessions were conducted, an allowance was given for students to retake courses in which they received below-average grades, and a five-year normal option for degree completion was developed.⁷⁴ To offer students a cross-cultural immersion in the inner-city experience, in 1974 Goshen established formal relations with the Chicago Urban Life Center.

LATE 1970S: DECLINE IN BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Despite various efforts made to adjust to the surge in black students, African American enrollment numbers at colleges across the country declined during the mid-1970s. Goshen's campus again reflected this national shift. While 1976 marked the initial nationwide decline in black student enrollment at postsecondary institutions,⁷⁶ by 1974 Goshen's enrollment had already fallen from sixty-four in 1971 to thirty-five; less than 3 percent of the total student population.⁷⁷ Through the remainder of the 1970s, African American enrollment at Goshen barely reached above thirty students. Goshen's registrar office linked the decrease to a reduced number of blacks in the incoming classes, and registrar John Nyce affirmed that the college had been more intentional in previous years about its efforts to recruit a variety of minority students.⁷⁸ A decline in the retention of black students also contributed to lowered enrollment. In 1972, the number of black students returning after one year at Goshen was just above 20 percent and in 1975, 36 percent returned after their first year.⁷⁹ In a 1974 *Record* article, an African American Goshen student described the Goshen College black student as "dying at a much faster rate than ever."⁸⁰

One explanation for the nationwide decline in black student enrollment is the unwillingness on the part of those in power at white colleges to consider making a real institutional transformation to fully recognize the presence of black students on campus. Author Allen Ballard said of white colleges in this period, "most institutions have absorbed the black students' initial thrust for change by creating 'autonomous' E.O.P [Equal Opportunity Programs] and ethnic studies programs. Yet few colleges have moved beyond that point to a true empowerment of blacks within white institutions." Ballard concluded that, if white colleges

wanted to nurture cross-cultural coexistence on campuses, “their first and foremost act should be recognition of the institutionalized racism built into their structure.” He added that white colleges needed to give black students the sense that an institutional commitment had been made to racial equality.⁸¹

The lack of an institution-wide dedication to embrace black students also may have explained the declining enrollment numbers at Goshen. A decrease in the level of funding available for black student scholarships was one concrete example of Goshen’s lack of a comprehensive pledge to diversity.⁸² Everette Ersery suggested, more generally, the attempt to “merely assimilate” black students failed because the institution reflected a “middle-class, rural, white Mennonite perspective” and recruited many African Americans with the idea that their admission was “an opportunity, a gift if you will, a chance to get an education and improve their station in life.” According to Ersery, the institution’s mentality was that Goshen College had everything to offer and nothing to gain from the incoming black students. As a result, he concluded, “The African American students were frustrated that they were not seen as offering anything valuable in who they were and what they represented.”⁸³



Sylvia Dyson, Director of Cross-Cultural Relations, 1979

The threat posed to the traditional culture of Goshen College by the increase in black students served as one rationale for the institution’s insufficient efforts to fully integrate African Americans. A 1978 *Record* article questioned whether the majority’s fear—that admitting black students would challenge the dominant culture of the institution—underlay Goshen’s reserved efforts.⁸⁴ Tony Brown, a Goshen College faculty member in the late 1970s, identified a tension between those in the administration who felt black students had to adjust to

22 the majority culture and those who believed that the institution had to make some of its own adjustments.⁸⁵ Lee Roy Berry held in a 1978 *Record* article that, because Goshen did not know how to confront the problems that arose with increased black student enrollment, they instead decided to decrease their efforts in recruiting them.⁸⁶

Despite declining enrollment numbers related to an apparent unwillingness to fully commit to diversity, Goshen, along with other white colleges in the United States, continued its efforts to attract more minority students. As a part of these efforts, postsecondary education institutions implemented a new approach in their recruitment strategy. In the mid-1970s, many colleges sought black students who had more experience with, and therefore might be more willing to adjust to, the standards of their campus' majority ethos and culture.⁸⁷ Goshen began targeting more Christian and Mennonite African Americans. Thus, in 1978, 67 percent of the incoming minority students identified as Mennonite.⁸⁸

In altering its recruitment strategy, Goshen also continued its attempt to retain minority students. In 1975, Goshen College President J. L. Burkholder created the "Task Force on Minority Students." Less than two years later, the Task Force failed due to a lack of leadership and inadequate funding.⁸⁹ In response, Burkholder established the Cross-Cultural Relations Center in 1977.⁹⁰ The Center's primary tasks were to provide academic counseling, promote campus sensitivity to the needs of minority students, provide "economically viable" programs for minority students, and raise awareness about minority cultures on campus.⁹¹ However, the center's funding did not allow for a full-time director, leaving practical steps ill-defined and ultimately posing a major challenge to actualizing some of the program's primary goals. White Goshen faculty member Vernon Schertz believed the program suffered because "We, as Mennos, have trouble trusting someone not of us to do the job."⁹² In 1978, the Center hired Sylvia Dyson, an African American woman, as a full-time director.⁹³

While the college's new minority recruitment efforts brought in more black students with Mennonite cultural experience, this did not eliminate the significant cultural gap between whites and blacks on campus in the early 1980s. During these years, black alumnus James Logan arrived at Goshen from the Bronx. Logan had prior experience with Mennonites but found the Mennonites he encountered at Goshen to be quite different from those he had known in New York. He remembered the lack of racial and ethnic diversity as one of the first major differences he experienced at Goshen College and went through a degree of "culture shock" during his first few months.⁹⁴ Regina Shands Stoltzfus, another African American student in the early 1980s with prior involvement in the Mennonite church, said the Mennonite environment at Goshen was quite different from the one she had experienced growing up in Cleveland. She remembered being shocked at encountering students who had had no prior interactions with blacks, and concluded that "cross-cultural clashes made everybody weary on all sides."⁹⁵

Racism was still a reality at Goshen in the early 1980s, evident in a 1979 *Record* article reporting that residence life personnel "warned" an incoming white student that she had been assigned a black roommate, whom she was subsequently permitted to refuse.⁹⁶ More subtle racism was also present: Shands Stoltzfus remarked that one of the biggest challenges she faced was the assumptions made about who she was and where she was from because she was African American.⁹⁷ Logan noted that, outside of a few exceptions, he generally found the environment at Goshen College to be somewhat hostile toward African Americans.⁹⁸ Wilma Bailey, an African American Goshen faculty member in the early 1980s, said she sensed that black students were first seen as racial minorities, rather than individuals, and that there was

24 generally less respect for black students.⁹⁹

Many of the issues and criticisms brought to Goshen's attention in earlier years, related to black students feeling an identity loss on campus, were again voiced during the early 1980s. In a meeting held with the administration in 1981, a number of black students noted their frustration with the lack of social and cultural activities, and significant black presence, on campus.¹⁰⁰ One of the biggest challenges Logan identified was the ignorance of those students who were unfamiliar with black culture and lifestyle. He felt that some whites believed black culture was inferior to their own and sensed a real pressure from the institution to "redescribe" himself in the white-Mennonite image.¹⁰¹ Shands Stoltzfus did not think African Americans at Goshen were taken seriously and also felt that the emphasis on "equality" essentially meant everyone should become "white" rather than recognizing and affirming differences among students.¹⁰² Mirroring the sentiment expressed almost a decade earlier, a student in a *Record* article commented on the irony of Goshen's cross-cultural emphasis through study abroad programs coexisting with its lack of attention to the issues between minorities and whites on its campus.¹⁰³ A student in a 1979 *Record* article suspected that if many of these trends continued, the level of Goshen's black student enrollment would continue to decline.¹⁰⁴

The low number of black faculty at Goshen College remained another major concern in the efforts to retain African American students. Tony Brown, teaching at Goshen in the late 1970s, assessed that Goshen College did not do all it could to seek out the employment of more minorities.¹⁰⁵ By 1983, only one black faculty member had been granted tenure.¹⁰⁶ Some black students noted this lack of black faculty to serve as role models as a significant concern.¹⁰⁷ A 1985 North Central Accreditation (NCA) report also identified the lack of minority faculty as exacerbating the difficulties faced by minority students on

campus. The college's NCA Self-Study showed three full-time minority faculty.¹⁰⁸

Continuing to hear the issues raised by African Americans on campus, the Goshen College administration actively expressed its desire to keep working toward minority student recruitment and retention. In 1980, the administration deemed retention of minority students as the main responsibility of the Cross-Cultural Relations Office.¹⁰⁹ The college also worked with the Mennonite Church's efforts to foster more leadership in urban churches by developing a program in 1979 to train black and Latino Mennonite Church leaders. Named in honor of the Mennonite Church's first black minister, the James Lark Leadership Program was a collaborative effort of the Black Caucus of the Mennonite Church, Goshen College, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries.¹¹⁰ Darrell Broaddus, an African American 1973 Goshen College graduate, directed the program. In addition to training young minority leaders for the Mennonite Church, the program offered an opportunity for white students to become more acquainted with urban congregations and black culture.¹¹¹ The program ended in 1986, largely due to low enrollment and lack of funding.¹¹²

By the turn of the decade, despite continued efforts to enhance the experience of minority students on campus, the number of black students at Goshen had decreased. A summary provided by the Minority Student Retention Report indicated that a high number of minority students withdrew from Goshen College during the fall of 1979. While the white student dropout rate was 6 percent, that of racial minorities was 30. Furthermore, low numbers of minority students graduated within four years, and nearly 60 percent of students dismissed from the college during the second half of the 1980s were minorities.¹¹³

Federal changes made in the early 1980s that significantly affected the minority student access to higher education provided some explanation for Goshen's declining enrollment. In 1981, President Ron-

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ald Reagan called for a 25 percent cut in federal funds for education. The resulting rise in tuition costs and drop in financial aid especially affected minority students. The cutbacks decreased funding to poor students and were detrimental to the future of many black colleges as well.¹¹⁴ A 1982 *Record* report estimated that at Goshen these changes affected one-third of the whites, while they severely affected as many as two-thirds of the minority students.¹¹⁵

Although various members of the campus gave different reasons for the lower attendance of black students at Goshen College, a reserved institutional commitment to achieving its articulated goal of an increase in minority students was likely a major factor, and perhaps the most decisive. A 1981 *Record* article questioned whether the decrease was the result of a conscious effort by the college to enroll less black students to, as one student put it, “maintain comfortable relations.”¹¹⁶ Logan said the administration seemed willing to meet with black students to discuss their concerns, yet their efforts beyond this were not strong enough.¹¹⁷

LATE 1980S - PRESENT: ONGOING EFFORTS

Through the latter half of the 1980s and into the 1990s, Goshen continued to expand areas of programming in the effort to attract more minority students. The administration approved a new affirmative action plan to increase the diversity of employees and set a goal to have 5 percent of its teaching and administrative positions filled by people of color.¹¹⁸ Following up on this goal, the Special Assistant to the President in Multicultural Affairs position and the Multicultural Affairs Office (MAO) were established in 1992.¹¹⁹ The MAO worked to increase cross-cultural understanding and assisted in the implementation of the affirmative action policy. Under Zenebe Abebe's leadership, other programs—such as the Alumni Scholars Forum, Martin Luther King Study Day, and course enrichment grants—were implemented to strengthen the campus's level of multicultural awareness. Zenebe initiated and taught the class "Analysis of Racism and Power." After he left, Regina Shands Stoltzfus was among those who taught the class, until it was discontinued around 2004. In the 1980's, Goshen College also began offering the class "Race, Class, and Ethnic Relations." Taught by Regina most recently as well, it continues to be consistently full, with students on a waiting list. The admissions department also restated its goal of recruiting students from a "multicultural ethnic" background and created the Multicultural Leadership Award to offer a form of financial aid for minority students.¹²⁰

In recent years, Goshen has remained active in its attempts to increase campus diversity.¹²¹ Former Goshen College President Shirley Showalter formed the Multicultural Education Task Force (METF) to provide recommendations for institutional structures to aid the advancement of diversity. Proposals for recruiting and retaining minor-

∞ ity students at Goshen were outlined in the working Diversity Plan:
2 2004-2010, a document summarizing an institution-wide effort to “strengthen Goshen College’s commitment to racial and ethnic diversity and intercultural learning.” The document’s proposals were written by the MAO with the Multicultural Affairs Committee (MAC). Including representatives from the President’s Council, students, faculty, and administration, the MAC was created in 2004 to provide leadership for Goshen College’s institutional intercultural efforts. Over a dozen organizations and programs have been or are being created in response to the Diversity Plan’s proposals.¹²²

During the second half of the 20th century, Goshen College, along with colleges across the country, made continuous efforts to increase the level of racial and ethnic diversity on its campus. Yet, following the late 1960s and early 1970s surge in black student population, most colleges have experienced a decline in black student enrollment. Since Goshen's own surge three decades ago, black student enrollment has remained between 2 and 3 percent. Goshen has made ongoing attempts to show that the institution values intercultural relationships and diversity, but the limited results of these efforts demonstrate their inadequacy. As Regina Shands Stoltzfus wonders, how much of this historical pattern represents how "every generation had to deal with this," and how much of it was simply "lack of progress?"¹²³

An analysis of the history of white postsecondary institutions such as Goshen College suggests that the unwillingness of these institutions to make a full commitment to integrating black students posed a significant obstacle to sustaining a considerable African American presence on campus. Since the first hiring of an African American faculty member at Goshen in 1969, the vast majority hired in subsequent years only served part time or as adjuncts.¹²⁴ Even Goshen's first black faculty member, Lee Roy Berry, was a graduate of Eastern Mennonite College and came to the institution by his own initiative, rather than through an active effort by the college to seek him out.¹²⁵ Tony Brown observed, "Being politically correct is an important thing at Goshen [...] but taking that and operationalizing those ideas and taking specific steps that create change is another issue." He assessed the institution's attitude toward blacks as "they can come here [...] but we're a Mennonite college and they're going to have to understand that." He believed that as a result of that attitude, Goshen was unwilling to com-

30 mit all that it would take to attract and retain African Americans and therefore didn't provide the necessary infrastructure.¹²⁶ Wilma Bailey agreed, remarking, "Goshen, like many Mennonite institutions, wanted diversity in race and ethnicity, but did not want to change its cultural climate or curriculum to meet the needs or interest areas of urban African American students."¹²⁷

The resistance found at Goshen and colleges nationwide to expand the definition of one's cultural identity to include those from a different cultural background is a microcosm of ongoing racial tensions found throughout society. Logan said that before Goshen College could really take active steps to combat its racism, it had to admit that it was inherently racist because of historical forces that continue to influence the institution.¹²⁸ As the authors of *The Agony of Education* remarked, "The predominantly white university is not an island of tolerance in an ocean of intolerance [...] From the black perspective it is another major arena of everyday intolerance and racism."¹²⁹

In addition to reflecting tensions in society at large, Goshen College also reflects ongoing issues found in the North-American Mennonite Church. As an African American member of the Mennonite Church, Lee Roy Berry reasoned that white Mennonites and African Americans have had a hard time understanding one another because of the historic division between blacks and whites in America. Furthermore, he said, these groups at Goshen had a hard time hearing one another's stories, because respecting the other's story of persecution seemingly demeaned one's own.¹³⁰ Regina Shands Stoltzfus applauded Mennonites for their ability to talk about difficult issues and build strategies to confront them, but she didn't think the race issue could be properly addressed at Goshen or elsewhere in the Mennonite community without bumping into "white Mennonite guilt." This "guilt," she explained, arises out of the inability of Mennonites who are "all about peace" to admit that they might be racist.¹³¹ Berry believed that to

African Americans, Mennonites are still white, suggesting conversely that to white Mennonites, blacks, because of their racial difference, even when identifying as Mennonite, are foremost black, and therefore unable to be entirely Mennonite.¹³²

The North-American Mennonite Church also continues to struggle with adopting a definition of Mennonite identity that is not exclusively tied to history and culture. In his experience as an African American in the Mennonite church, Tony Brown felt there was still an understanding among the majority of Mennonites that being Mennonite is linked to some, “historical, traditional, biological definition.”¹³³ In his book *Black and Mennonite*, Hubert Brown argues that the Anabaptist tradition should be made available to all people, not simply those with a European heritage, and that the low number of African Americans in Mennonite institutions gave support to the racist assumption that blacks were unimportant.¹³⁴ Historian Irvin B. Horst affirmed this observation: “Frequently we (that is, ethnic Mennonites) fail to appreciate the positive qualities of groups who are not of Swiss, German, or Dutch background [...] Too seldom do we attract others from outside our circles and when we do, we rarely extend to them the full social privileges accorded an individual in our own group.”¹³⁵ Everette Ersery said that, because of this general attitude in the Mennonite Church, Goshen, as a Mennonite school, seemed to have little awareness of the experience of African Americans in the United States.¹³⁶

In contrast, the University of Virginia, a predominantly white institution, was not beyond the ability to transform in a way that fully embraced its African American population. The university has been recognized nationally for its successful efforts at recruiting, retaining, and graduating African Americans. Underlying this success has been an “Afrocentered” approach to its recruitment and retention efforts, defined as “the importance of senior level administration’s commitment to institutional change, a seamless transition between recruitment

32 and retention, the coexistence of Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism in student recruitment, the commitment of African Americans who view themselves as change agents, the cultivation of allies, students as ‘owners’, connecting the community to the university, and the need to communicate with ‘stewards of diversity’ in the university community.”¹³⁷

Though differing significantly from a small, private, church-affiliated educational institution, the University of Virginia’s strategy of encouraging other cultures to fully contribute to the culture of the majority could still be applied at Goshen College. Goshen could begin by following the “two-way integration” suggested in *The Agony of Education*: “Two-way integration means that white administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students listen carefully to African-American students and parents, individually and collectively, and make major adjustments in their own attitudes and perspectives, as well as alterations in discriminatory practices in all areas of campus life.”¹³⁸ Tony Brown agreed that Goshen must confront the ongoing challenge to be less exclusive, less ethnocentric, and more open to how African American students can enhance and bring strengths to the community.¹³⁹

A full institutional commitment to racial and ethnic diversity does not have to come at the expense of Goshen College’s philosophical or theological pillars. None of the institution’s presently stated core values are in conflict with a more flexible Mennonite cultural identity, one that is not exclusively defined by traditional cultural standards. As Hubert Brown suggests, one can be black *and* Mennonite.¹⁴⁰ Given the Anabaptist call for nonconformity to the ways of the world and complete conformity to Christ, the Mennonite Church should be willing to redefine its Mennonitism beyond a limited social ethos, precisely because this redefinition was the practice of Christ, who radically redefined a religion and made it more inclusive. Goshen College has a particular responsibility for living out this call because, as Shands

Stoltzfus said, it must be the institutions of the church that “grab hold and work out those issues in their individual context”; she concluded, “If we’re not actively involved in making this a true statement, we need to stop saying it.”¹⁴¹

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ENDNOTES

1. Hubert L. Brown, *Black and Mennonite* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976), 74-75.

2. The terms “black” and “African American” will be used interchangeably throughout this paper as synonymous terms to reduce redundancy. Although in the larger society the terms “black” and “African American” are afforded a variety of interpretations, in the specific context of this paper, they are used to connote more traditionally understood definitions of the terms. This definition would include those individuals who are identified as being black United States citizens with a historical relationship to the continent of Africa, albeit an indirect one separated by generations. The individuals are also generally assumed to be associated with the common culture, traditions, and heritage shared by those whose ancestors were linked to the African slaves brought to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade. In the context of this paper, the terms should not be understood to include those black Americans who are connected to a more recently arrived group (within the past few decades) of the African Diaspora residing on the North American continent with a more direct connection to the African continent.

3. James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt, *Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 29-32.

4. Le Roy Bechler, *The Black Mennonite Church in North America, 1886-1986* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), 41-42.

5. *Ibid.*, 55-76.

6. *Ibid.*, 117.

7. Hubert Brown, 69.

8. Qtd. in Susan Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service: A History of Goshen College 1894-1994* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994), 2, 6.

9. Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 4.

10. Goshen College, “About GC,” <http://www.goshen.edu/aboutgc/> (accessed March 20, 2006).

11. Goshen College, “Diversity at Goshen College,” <http://www.goshen.edu/aboutgc/diversity.php> (accessed March 20, 2006).

12. According to the most recently recorded numbers available on student enrollment for Fall 2005 from Goshen College’s Registrar’s Office.

13. “African Americans and White Colleges and Universities,” in *En-*

36 *cyclopedia of African American Education*, ed. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson et al. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1996), 364.

14. National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts," <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98> (accessed April 12, 2006).

15. Qtd. in Hubert Brown, 28.

16. *Ibid.*, 78.

17. Rom. 10:12 NIV.

18. Cynthia L. Jackson, *African American Education* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2001), 48.

19. Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee & Archives, "A Historical Timeline of Minority and Urban Ministry in the United States, 1910-1997," www.mcusa-archives.org/resources/mimorityministries-timeline.html (accessed January 22, 2006).

20. Number of students identified by photographs and corresponding hometown given in each edition of the *Maple Leaf* [Goshen College annual] from 1943-1978. The Goshen College Registrar's Office had no available data on racial/ethnic minority student enrollment numbers prior to the late 1970s.

21. Fisher Miller, 199.

22. A theater production about the dynamics of black-white race relations in pre-apartheid South Africa. *Maple Leaf*, 1959.

23. Fisher Miller, 209, 229.

24. *Maple Leaf*, 1958.

25. *Ibid.*, 1966, 1967.

26. Fisher Miller, 209.

27. Jackson, 257.

28. "GCCG and 'Moral Leadership,'" *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

29. "GCCG and Afro-Americans...Senate Role, Black Enrollment Issues in Human Rights Stand," *Record*, May 17, 1968, 2.

30. Fisher Miller, 269.

31. "African Americans and White Colleges and Universities," 96.

32. See note 20.

33. Fisher Miller, 229.

34. "Minority Students at Mennonite Colleges Fall Enrollments, 1971-78," James Lark Leadership Education Program 1976-1979 (folder), V-4-39.3, Goshen College Urban Ministries Program, 1976-85, Box #4, Mennonite Historical Archives, Goshen, IN.

35. Arvis Dawson, interview by author, March 13, 2006.

36. Everette Ersery, e-mail to author, March 7, 2006.

37. Allen B. Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk* (New York: Harper

and Row, 1973), 80.

38. Tony Brown, interview by author, March 10, 2006.

39. "Goshen Students to Confront Issue of 'Subtle Racism,'" *Record*, March 20, 1968, 3.

40. Ersery, e-mail.

41. "A Nation Divided—Will There Be a Sane Answer," *Record*, April 12, 1968, 4.

42. Ersery, e-mail.

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44. "A Nation Divided—Will There Be a Sane Answer," 4.

45. Ballard, 78.

46. "Black Menos Get Together at GC," *Record*, March 18, 1971, 3.

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50. Tony Brown, interview.

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51. "GCCG and 'Moral Leadership,'" 2.

52. "Eli Hochstedler...," *Record*, June 21, 1968, 4.

53. "GCCG and 'Moral Leadership,'" 2.

54. "Berry Reacts to Student Forum," *Record*, December 10, 1970, 2.

55. "Minorities: Ten Years After," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 4-5.

56. "Goshen Students to Confront Issue of 'Subtle Racism,'" *Record*, March 20, 1968, 3.

57. "Seminar Studies Racial Tensions," *Record*, January 12, 1973, 3.

58. Lee Roy Berry, interview by author, March 10, 2006.

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61. "Freshman Don Desaussure Recalls UFW Experience," *Record*, November 14, 1975, 5.

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67. Tony Brown, interview.

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81. Ballard, 153.
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 138. Feagin, Vera, and Imani, 155-156.
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