

**M**INORITIES AND WOMEN IN

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HIGHER EDUCATION IN

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WEST VIRGINIA

---

AND CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES IN

---

THE HUNTINGTON AREA

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**W**EST VIRGINIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE UNITED STATES

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

## THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, first created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and reestablished by the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the Federal Government. By the terms of the 1983 act, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

## THE STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and section 6(c) of the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

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*This summary report of the West Virginia  
Advisory Committee to the United States  
Commission on Civil Rights was prepared  
for the information and consideration of the  
Commission. Statements and viewpoints in  
the report should not be attributed to the  
Commission or to the Advisory Committee,  
but only to individual participants in the  
community forum where the information was  
gathered.*



LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

West Virginia Advisory Committee to  
the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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The West Virginia Advisory Committee (SAC) is pleased to submit this summary report of a community forum as part of its responsibility to advise the Commission about civil rights issues in the State of West Virginia. The forum was held on December 10, 1987, in Huntington, and the resulting report was approved unanimously by a vote of 11 to 0 at a subsequent meeting.

Discrimination in higher education in West Virginia was one of the prominent issues raised at a previous community forum held on November 18, 1986, in Morgantown. (A briefing memorandum covering that forum, "Discrimination in West Virginia," was submitted to the Commissioners in April 1988.) To pursue this matter, the West Virginia SAC held its December 1987 forum primarily on participation of minorities and women in West Virginia institutions of higher education.

As part of its community forum, the SAC also decided to take advantage of the opportunity afforded to learn about civil rights concerns in the Huntington area. For the second session of the forum, the Committee invited several representatives of local civil rights agencies and advocacy groups to appear.

The West Virginia Advisory Committee hopes that the information contained in this report, while not an exhaustive analysis, will be of interest to the Commissioners as well as to State and college officials and citizens concerned with civil rights issues in West Virginia.

Respectfully,

Adam R. Kelly, Chairman  
West Virginia Advisory Committee

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Acknowledgment

The Committee is indebted to the staff of the Commission's Eastern Regional Division for assistance in planning the community forum and producing this summary report. A complete transcript of the forum is available in the Eastern Regional Division office of the Commission.





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## Introduction

In keeping with its responsibilities to monitor civil rights activities in West Virginia, the West Virginia Advisory Committee conducted a two-part community forum in Huntington on December 10, 1987. The purpose of the forum was, first, to investigate the issue of minority and female representation in higher education in the State and, second, to learn of local civil rights issues in the Huntington area. Participants included Douglas Call, representing the West Virginia Board of Regents, the agency charged with overall administration of the State's institutions of higher learning; Neil S. Bucklew, president, West Virginia University; Dale F. Nitzschke, president, Marshall University; and Hazo W. Carter, president, West Virginia State College. Respondents to these panelists were Herbert H. Henderson, a member of the national NAACP board of directors, and Barbara J. Oden, a former member of the Advisory Council of Faculty to the West Virginia Board of Regents.

This forum addressed possible overt and covert discrimination in the employment of minority and women faculty members in State colleges and universities. It also addressed the problem of recruiting and retention of minority and female students at those institutions. The Committee is pleased to report to the Commissioners that as a result of its having directed attention toward these areas of concern, various steps towards solving them are being undertaken. For example, in May 1988 the West Virginia State Education Department announced

inauguration of an affirmative action program that establishes numerical goals for the future hiring of minority, women, and handicapped employees. This program is intended to serve as a model that all local boards within the State will follow in their hiring practices. In July 1988 the West Virginia Board of Regents held a conference at which guidelines and regulations concerning minority and women representation and faculty employment were announced. Furthermore, in January 1989 the president of West Virginia University, Dr. Bucklew, announced that additional minority faculty would be employed at the institution "no matter what the cost."

Participants in the second session included Carole A. Boster, executive director, Huntington Human Rights Commission; Joan Ross, executive director, Southern Community Action Council; Jane Gibbons, representing the Center for Independent Living; Linda Naymick-Harrison, coordinator, Cabell County Women's Equity Program; and Dolores Johnson, president, NAACP Huntington chapter.

### Minorities and Women in Higher Education

The forum began with a welcoming address by the Honorable Robert Nelson, mayor of the city of Huntington.

The presentation by Douglas Call addressed first the fact that previously traditionally black institutions in West Virginia have seen a dramatic change in their enrollment. Bluefield State College and West Virginia State College, once all black, now have 91.6 percent and 87.4 percent white enrollment, respectively. In West Virginia colleges and universities there are 67,967 students, with approximately 5.9 percent being minorities. Dr. Call noted that 1.5 percent of the total faculty in West Virginia institutions of higher education is black; 5.1 percent of the administrative staff is black. There is a total of 8,470 full-time black employees at higher education institutions. According to him, the percentage of black employees has remained constant for the past decade. He noted that West Virginia has managed only to maintain--not increase--its enrollment of minority students. However, he added that the total black population of West Virginia is less than 4 percent.

In concluding his presentation, Dr. Call said that over 55 percent of the present student enrollment statewide is female. That figure has steadily increased; it was 45 percent in 1975 and 52 percent in 1981. Further, female faculty members have increased from 24.4 percent in 1975 to 30.4 percent in 1987.

The next presentation was by Neil S. Bucklew, president of the West Virginia University (WVU), who focused not on employment or enrollment statistics, but on large issues on the campus. In his opinion, American higher education has adopted a compliance mentality of measuring itself against particular standards that are often incomplete but accepted as an end. Dr. Bucklew believes that an institution like the WVU serves as a role model for other large employers in West Virginia, and the leadership at the highest level of an institution is critical in establishing an organizational climate conducive to increased employment of and participation by minorities and women.

For these reasons, he created a position of special assistant to the president for social justice and established a social justice council. The council is set up as a chief means for participating in setting campus policies on minority issues, women's issues, and handicap issues, and for coordinating their programs. The WVU also established a center for black culture to enhance the quality of life experience on campus for black students. In addition, the WVU created a sexual assault presentation education program as well as a child care clearinghouse designed to help educationally and economically disadvantaged West Virginians.

Next, the president of Marshall University, Dale F. Nitzschke, said that minorities enrolled at Marshall University

constituted 8.6 percent of the student body in 1985 and 7.4 percent in 1987. Black faculty was 1.7 percent in 1985 and 2.1 percent in 1987. Female enrollment was 27 percent in 1985 and 43 percent in 1987. Dr. Nitzschke reported that female faculty had increased in percentage. He pointed out that Marshall University had a full-time affirmative action officer whose responsibility is to monitor affirmative action programs of the university. He also described the activities of both the university community-based Affirmative Action Advisory Committee and a minority student program which is very active and visible on the campus.

He observed that since minority students are a small number, they faced a sense of alienation and isolation. Consequently, he felt their dropout rates were higher because there was not the critical mass essential to minimize or prevent the feeling of alienation and isolation. He agreed with Dr. Bucklew that the environment is inhospitable to minority students on many of the major college campuses in West Virginia.

Regarding the recruitment of minority students, he described the "weekend for black high school honor students program" which brings top black students to Marshall University to expose students and their parents to campus environment and offer them a financial incentive of a 1-year tuition waiver. He mentioned two specific barriers to recruiting minority students: lack of funds for the State of West Virginia to support those students wanting to go to colleges, and the image problem, i.e., the perception

that many colleges in the State are not the "best places in the world for minorities to be."

Dr. Nitzschke felt the primary barrier to employment of minority faculty members was economic. He said that the starting pay offered at Marshall was \$11,000 a year lower than what institutions of similar size offered in other States. He pointed out that in his attempts to recruit qualified black faculty members, the school had taken what he termed extraordinary steps in order to be competitive, including free housing, free transportation, moving expenses, and paying bills for the first 6 months. "We're not competitive even then," he added.

The final panelist for the formal presentation was Hazo W. Carter, president of West Virginia State College. Dr. Carter said that his institution was founded for the purpose of educating black citizens of West Virginia, and that from the date of its founding in 1891 until 1954, the faculty and student body were predominantly black. When the college launched a program to promote racial integration in 1954, large numbers of white students enrolled. Within a very few years, he said, whites outnumbered blacks in the student body; blacks became a minority group; and the situation continues today. In the fall of 1987 there were 4,503 students, the second highest enrollment in the history of West Virginia State. There were 507 blacks, which came to approximately 11 percent of the student body. He commented that West Virginia State College has the most highly



integrated student body among the colleges in the State of West Virginia.

Of the 138 full-time faculty members, he said, blacks constitute 21 percent of the total. When other minorities are included, the total minority representation amounts to 28 percent. The faculty at West Virginia State College has been, and continues to be, the most highly integrated faculty in higher education in the State of West Virginia. He mentioned that women are well-represented in the faculty and student body; women make up 45 percent of the faculty and 57 percent of the student enrollment. Dr. Carter said that serious efforts to enroll more black students have been made for a number of years. These efforts are continuing. In agreement with the preceding speakers, he observed that comparatively low faculty salaries in West Virginia contribute to the difficulties encountered in recruiting qualified black faculty members.

Herbert H. Henderson, former president of the West Virginia NAACP and presently a member of the NAACP national board of directors, responded to the presentation by these educators. He suggested to college presidents that a mandated sensitivity program for faculty and staff be inaugurated. Mr. Henderson said, "black kids from here went to the finest schools in America but they didn't go to West Virginia University. A whole slew of young black doctors hit the roads and took off from West Virginia. Why are we losing them? I think they need to have a sense of belonging and a sense of appeal....If we can get black

athletes on the campuses of our colleges," he asked, "why can't we get black coaches?"

Mr. Henderson concluded his comments with the observation, "blacks themselves should share some of the blame for some of the problems we have.... We need to do some things about correcting some of the insular problems that affect the quality of life of blacks in America such as motivation and support to stay in school programs. It is a two-edged sword. If the black people just sit back and wait for whites to make it right for them, I feel sorry for them. We have to learn to help ourselves." He concluded, "I say to the Committee members and everybody in this room, the first thing to realize is that you have a problem."

Barbara J. Oden, former member of the Advisory Council of the Faculty to the West Virginia Board of Regents, discussed affirmative action as it applies to higher education. Dr. Oden believed that affirmative action in higher education has been the "only thing that has gotten us as far as we have gotten." In spite of affirmative action, she observed, numbers of minority students and minority faculty have been dwindling and there has been no significant increase in the number of female faculty in recent years. In her opinion, affirmative action is failing and until it gains a philosophy, it is bound to be ineffective in the college setting. When affirmative action develops a philosophy that is central to the mission of the institution, everything will be directed toward accomplishing that mission. She maintains that one would, then, no longer ask questions such as,

"Do we have 20 black faculty? Do we have 30 female faculty?"

Either an institution does or doesn't have the right faculty to carry out its mission, that insists that American youth have an opportunity to acquire their multiracial, diverse learning experience.

According to Dr. Oden, it is important to recruit as many black faculty members as possible since it is sometimes difficult to understand black people if you do not "have black people around you" and since there must be a critical mass, not only of students but of faculty, to avoid the feeling of isolation and alienation on college campuses.

#### Civil Rights Issues in the Huntington Area

This session was opened by Carole A. Boster, executive director of the Huntington Human Rights Commission. She reported that most of the discrimination complaints received by her agency were based on race and sex. The next largest category was age, followed closely by handicap. According to Ms. Boster, Huntington's population is 6.5 percent black and 7.5 percent all minorities. She pointed out that the human relations ordinance under which her agency operates charges that agency to strive to eliminate discrimination through education and persuasion, and in the last 5 years the commission has undertaken one of the most extensive education and outreach programs of any of the other human relations commissions across the country.

Joan Ross, executive director of the Southern Community Action Council, addressed problems concerning age discrimination in the Huntington area. She pointed out that older workers, that is, those over 45, are discreetly shunned by employers because of the stereotype that older workers are slower and need to be retrained, an investment that is considered unlikely to be repaid. She maintained that an older woman, if hired at all, is likely to get a substantially lower salary than a younger person and paid less than an older man. She described a recent case which supported her contention.

Jane Gibbons, associated with the Center for Independent Living, discussed some of the problems confronting handicapped persons in the Greater Huntington area. The thrust of her remarks reflected the responsiveness of the Huntington City Council to the needs of handicapped persons. She recounted several examples where problems handicapped persons faced in Huntington were resolved satisfactorily when brought to the attention of appropriate city government agencies.

This was followed by a presentation by Linda Naymick-Harrison, coordinator of the Women's Equity Program in Cabell County. She gave a chronological account of various discrimination charges filed against the Cabell County School System. These suits were filed to challenge employment practices and policies within the school system concerning recruitment, hiring, selection, and promotion of women. She said that although an affirmative action plan has been developed

within the school system to address some of these problems, it does not, in her opinion, follow completely the guidelines for Title 7 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The next presentation was by Dolores Johnson, president of the Huntington chapter of the NAACP. According to Ms. Johnson, one of the major problem areas is the issue of police brutality. "Just this summer," she reported, "some young people were at a club, and arguments got started, and then a black youth got pulled out. Then there was excessive force used to calm him down. This hasn't happened once or twice, it's happened several times." Although a citizen advisory committee was formed in 1986 to work with the Huntington Police Department to defuse incidents of racial bigotry and alleged police brutality, she felt that the situation "does not seem to be getting any better, rather it seems to be getting worse." She also discussed the problem of racial harassment at schools and described NAACP efforts to work with parents and school officials to bring about change.

Summary

From the statements made by panelists at the forum, it is clear that they feel a problem does exist in major institutions of higher education regarding the representation of minorities and women among faculty members. The Advisory Committee heard of a variety of notable efforts made by the three major institutions to recruit and retain minority students and faculty members. The Committee also learned that the West Virginia colleges and universities simply cannot make competitive offers to prospective minority faculty recruits.

According to the panelists, in the past few years the civil rights climate in West Virginia institutions of higher learning has improved in many respects. The educational leaders at the forum all showed a high degree of commitment to both increasing the representation of minorities and women and creating an atmosphere hospitable to the educational and professional development of minority students and faculty members. Since strong public commitment by the institutional leadership is often a crucial ingredient in improving the situation of minorities and women, the public statements made by these educators may serve in the future as a positive catalyst on their respective campuses. The Committee plans to monitor developments at the State Board of Regents and other major institutions.

As for local civil rights issues in the Huntington area, the Advisory Committee heard that the city council has been responsive to the needs of handicapped persons, and the

Huntington Human Rights Commission was very active in its educational outreach efforts. The Committee also heard from the panelists allegations of age discrimination in employment and sex discrimination in the Cabell County school system, and police brutality in Huntington. The Committee wishes to bring these issues to the attention of proper local authorities by sharing this report with them.

