

Marie E. Bellis



The Black Arrival at Princeton

The university's first black administrator looks back on the 1960s—Part I

CARL A. FIELDS

In 1964, when Princeton became the nation's first predominantly white university to appoint a black administrator, there were only 12 black undergraduates in the student body. In 1971, when Carl A. Fields left Princeton to become planning officer of the University of Zambia (the first black American to hold such a position in Africa), there were more than 300. During those seven years, he played a leading role in the development of the black student community into a significant presence at the university.

A milestone in that process was the organization of the Princeton Association of Black Collegians, which marked its founding in the spring of 1967 by staging a conference on "The Future of the Negro Undergraduate," attended by black students and administrators from 41 Eastern colleges and universities. This month the Association of Black Princeton Alumni is celebrating the 10th anniversary of those events by holding another conference on campus to review the progress of the past decade and take a new look at the future.

Fields, who has founded his own African Technical Educational Consultant Service and also serves as a consultant for a number of educational institutions in this country, has recently completed a book, *Black in Two Worlds*, about his experiences at Princeton and in Zambia. This article is excerpted from the portion covering the time between his arrival at Princeton and the spring of 1967. Next week's sequel will cover the period between the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and the formation of the Third World Center at Princeton. Together they provide a unique insight into many of the changes the university underwent during the late 1960s.—Ed.

IT WAS A rainy January day in 1964. The downpour had begun in the early morning and seemed to get heavier with each passing hour. Looking out the window of my office at Columbia University Teachers College, I said to myself that nobody in his right mind would keep an appointment in such foul weather. But I waited a few more minutes for my scheduled visitor before telling my secretary that I was going off to see someone at the other end of the campus. Just as I was about to leave, a man wearing a thoroughly drenched raincoat and carrying a dripping umbrella came through the door. He took off his hat and rivulets of water ran to the floor. "I'm looking for Mr. Carl Fields," he said. "I'm he," I answered. He stuck out his hand and introduced himself. "I'm Brad Craig from Princeton University."

I didn't know it then, but that was the beginning of a fine relationship and friendship with a very decent human being. As I helped him off with his raincoat and umbrella, I couldn't keep from thinking, "Damn, this guy must mean business." We went into my office and he took a seat and made himself as comfortable as he could in his condition. I wished that I had a drink to offer him. In a very quiet, deliberate voice, with frequent clearings of the throat, which I came to know as characteristic of him, Brad started explaining what he and Princeton were about.

When he came to a pause, I broke in with the severest kind of interrogation I could muster. Forgetting that he was soaking wet, that he had shown up under really abominable conditions, I raked him and his institution over the coals of black indignation. As it happened, I had a personal understanding of the Princeton scene. A cousin of mine had tried to transfer

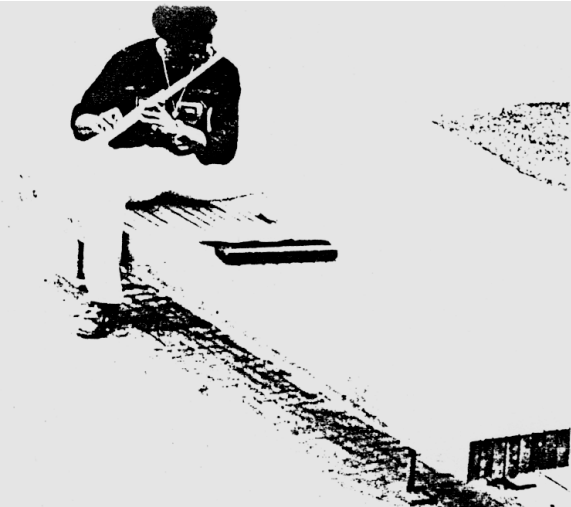
there from Ohio State University in the mid-'30s. He had a fine record and was accepted on the face of that until he showed up for his interview. He was light enough to pass for white and things went well until he identified himself as the nephew of a leading black administrator in Trenton. At that point he was told his application would be given consideration. He was never admitted as a student and wound up working in one of the Prospect Street eating clubs. He used to regale us younger fellows with tales about Princeton undergraduates, and the picture of privilege and discrimination at that lily-white institution was burned into my mind. In my years as a collegiate track athlete, I took particular pleasure in beating the best that Princeton could put out on the floor. Nonetheless, I had tremendous admiration for Bill Bonthron '34, one of the premier milers of the time. It was a real love-hate relationship from a distance.

After about 45 minutes of alternately questioning and haranguing, I cooled down and began listening attentively to the man and what he was saying. Princeton had come to a decision to appoint a black administrator. It had not been hastily arrived at. The president of the university was leading the effort to change the face of the institution and open it up to any deserving student, white or black. The blacks at the university were few and some had not made it through all four years. Nassau Hall didn't know why. A black administrator might help to shed some light on this and other problems. The position was in the Bureau of Student Aid, which Brad headed, and the person appointed would be working with him. I didn't find out until later what an asset this would be. He put it plain and simple. He admitted to all that I had said about the place, but then asked if there wasn't room for change. Though he didn't know it, he had touched a vulnerable spot. I come from a long line of Baptist-related people, ministers et al., and the power of conversion is a given in my heritage. I agreed to visit the university to meet some other people and size up the situation.

Before that visit, I talked with all of the people who were close to me in the civil rights movement, other colleagues and friends, as well as members of my family. The sum total of their observations was: "You must be out of your mind to consider it." "Do you want to be cut off from the people?" "You ain't no Uncle Tom, what do you want to go there for?" "Forget it!" "You must be joking! All they want to do is say they had a black man under consideration, but he didn't meet their requirements." "Another put-down!" But my father looked at me and said, "It won't be the first time you've taken on something that looked impossible. If you think it will work, try it. Faith can overcome a lot of things that seem impossible." We both remembered when I was offered a scholarship, based on my athletic ability, to St. John's University. The director of athletics had stated quite candidly that this was the first time they were offering a full scholarship to a black and, if I made it, they would be encouraged to bring in more blacks under the same terms. My dad had looked at me then and said, "It's your decision." I took it, and it paid off.

On the way down to Princeton, I debated whether I should drive up to the gate, hoping that arrangements had been made for me to use the parking lot, or park nearby and walk onto the campus. I decided on the latter. No point in risking possible insult by some guy who only followed orders. Better to walk through the gate like anybody else. West College wasn't hard to find and the directory on the inside wall showed me the way to the Bureau of Student Aid. With a slightly faster heartbeat than usual, I took the steps two at a time and opened the door. With a welcoming smile, the secretary ushered me into Brad's office. A quick, firm handshake and we got right down to business.

I was given a general description of the work and responsibilities of the bureau and a rough description of what I would be expected to do if I accepted the position. Now I



In 1964, black students were painfully alone at Princeton

don't regard financial transactions as one of my strong points, and I immediately wondered whether this might be a signal that would set the stage for easing me out of consideration. I lost no time in stating that my experience in financial matters was limited. The response was an assurance that it wasn't very complicated and, with some briefing, I certainly would be able to handle things. Besides, I could always bring questions to Brad if they proved to be too difficult. Another signal? As long as you're black and take the job, we don't expect too much from you. Were they just looking for window dressing?

After a while, Brad announced that we would be having lunch with a small group of people who had been active in promoting the idea of a black administrator. Ah ha! Now things would begin to shape up. As we walked to the Nassau Inn, we were joined by a couple of other men who asked how I'd gotten down to Princeton and where was my car. I told them I had parked outside the campus. Why? Orders had been left at the guard's kiosk to permit me to park inside. Oh? Someone had covered the small points. Everyone at lunch was pleasant, and I could spot nothing that would lead me to believe they were not sincere in their desire to have someone like me around. During our conversation, I stated what I thought and where I stood, right out and as direct as I could. At the end, all expressed the hope that I would be joining them in the near future. I was noncommittal in my response, but that seemed to be all right.

The next stop was at the office of Dean of the College J. Merrill Knapp. Tall, with mixed grey hair, pleasant, intelligent face, wearing casually elegant tweeds, the Dean "looked" like Princeton. He asked some of the same questions that I had heard at lunch and I gave back the same responses. He remarked about the variety and extent of my occupational background and said I didn't appear old enough to have done so much in such a short period of time. It was about then that I began to feel that I was going to accept the job.

Things were going along pretty well until the Dean asked me a particular question. He wanted to know how I thought I would make out in dealing with "the sophisticated Princeton student." I asked him to explain what he meant. He said Princeton students were among the upper 5 percent academically in the country. They came from cultured backgrounds, some with an overlay of foreign travel, and they were sophisticated people. Well, right then I almost told him

what he could do with the job. Instead, I suggested that he might not have read my resume too carefully. I had spent most of my life in New York City. I had met and worked with all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds and social strata. Whatever I had not encountered in the way of sophistication probably didn't matter too much. I'd be perfectly content to let the Princeton student hold on to his brand of sophistication as long as it didn't interfere with what I was doing. If it did interfere, I would then decide how to handle it. I said all of this with a good bit of heat that the Dean was quick to recognize. He explained that he had not meant to imply that I would be over my head, but only wanted to alert me to the fact that Princeton was slightly different as a setting from what I might have encountered before.

The interview ended on a pleasant note, but I felt then that this man would have difficulty in understanding what a person like me was all about. I walked slowly out of Nassau Hall with its smug aroma of history and over to West College, no less smug in its covering of ivy. Was this really where I wanted to be, even for a short time? Could I stand all of this that reeked of a solid white American history of denial of the real worth or ability of the black as a fully functioning member of society? What could a black man accomplish in this setting? I didn't mind taking on challenges, but this could be ridiculous!

Back in Brad's office, I let some of what I had been thinking come into the open. He listened intently and finally said, "I would like to have you as a colleague. You're the man for this position. I don't think that you'll regret accepting it." Fair is fair! Brad was meeting me on equal ground and with equal openness. He didn't say it would be easy. He stated that I could handle it if I wanted to. We shook hands and I promised to let him know of my decision within two weeks.

Driving back to New York City, I thought over all that had happened. Was this destiny of some sort? Why me out of all the well-qualified black men that I knew were around? It could be fantastic for a while. The irony of it began to appeal to me. Maybe some things could happen that would give Old Nassau some legitimacy to its colors of orange and black. Make the black on the shield a visible presence to be reckoned with.

ALTHOUGH I did not assume official duties until August 1, I arranged my schedule in the spring so I could visit Princeton about twice a week and get to know the place from as many angles as possible. Besides reading materials in the office, I roamed the campus and the town, observing anything and everything. This was time well spent; I saw and heard much that was to come in handy in the future. For instance, in 1964 you could find no black salesperson in any store or business on Nassau Street. Yet there was a sizeable black population that patronized all of the businesses in town. I discovered that most of the black professionals living in Princeton practiced or worked outside of town. The visible working black population was engaged in the same kinds of positions that they had held when I first saw Princeton as a youngster. On campus, black students were practically invisible. There were two black professors, neither of whom I saw or talked to for the first two years I was there.

In August I found, to my surprise, that I was to be part of the counseling group for freshmen and sophomores. I questioned this immediately, pointing out that I was totally new to the Princeton system. I was told the assignment was based on my past 15 years of counseling experience. The mechanics of the system would be easy to master and any help I needed with some of the more intricate questions or problems would be readily available. It was then that I threw my first curve ball. All right, I would serve as counselor, but I did not want any black students as counselees. What? But we thought you would be interested in dealing with "our colored boys." Your error! I know how to deal with black people.

If someone else has difficulty, let him look me up. Besides, I have my own way of getting to know them. I was adamant about this, and it was my first victory. A small one, but an important one, for it set up a mutual rapprochement: I'll play your game, if you play mine.

During the first few weeks of the semester, I often wished I had a *Candid Camera* crew at my disposal. About two-thirds of the students assigned to me were from below the Mason-Dixon line. I knew what was going to happen. None of them had ever had to ask a black man for anything in his life. Now they were going to be confronted with a black who could say yes or no to anything they had in mind and who would control, up to a point, the beginning of their academic careers at Princeton.

The Bureau of Student Aid was being redecorated and I was given an office at the rear of the floor. John Danielson '58, who later became and still is one of my closest friends, occupied the front. In order to get to me, the students had to pass through John's office. I sat and waited. "Good morning, sir. Are you Mr. Fields?" "No, Mr. Fields is in the next office." "Thank you, sir." There would be a polite knock. I'd say, "Come in." The door would open and into the room would step a fresh, apple-cheeked youngster, correct as could be. I would rise from my seat, stick out my hand and say, "I'm Mr. Fields." Talk about culture shock! There would be hesitation, a look at his card to see if he had the right name, a surprised expression and a quick recovery.

I would carry on as though it was the most natural thing in the world for this boy from the South to expect to be dealt with by a black professional at Princeton. Having taken care of business, I would direct him to the next point and make an appointment to see him again in a couple of weeks. If something arose before then, I'd tell him, he could feel free to make his own appointment to see me. Another handshake and out the door he would go.

The second time around was as interesting. They came in more composed, but still a little unsure of what to expect. I would then tell them that I knew it was a little unusual for them to find a black administrator at Princeton as their counselor. I was interested in seeing to it that they got the best service possible. If they felt strained or awkward in talking to me about their academic problems, I would understand and they had the option of selecting another person on the staff. I would even recommend someone if they were not familiar with the other persons. Not one student took me up on that suggestion during the whole time I was part of the counseling service. It was an interesting look at a new generation.

Meanwhile, I ascertained exactly how many blacks were on the campus — 12 undergraduates and four graduate students. Most of the black undergraduates were in the Freshman Class so, in a sense, we were starting out together. Observing their behavior as Princeton students was painful. There were never more than one or two together at any time. They were usually in the company of several other white students going to class or lunch or dinner. I don't think any of them had the same classes or precepts. The emphasis was supposed to be on integration of the blacks into the student body.

It was about three months before a black student spoke to me, and it caught me by surprise. Badi Foster, a graduate student in politics, saw me approaching his table in the cafeteria and asked if I would join him. I learned he had spent most of his childhood in Morocco before coming to the United States as a scholarship student at the University of Denver. He was as unprepared as were the southern white students to meet a black in an administrative capacity at Princeton.

About a week later, I staged my own encounter with another black student, Jerry Ingram '67. I knew him because he was on the football team and great things were expected of him. I accosted him as he was leaving the Student Center, introduced myself, and asked him why blacks on campus

seemed to avoid each other and certainly made no attempt to find out who strangers were. He was nonplussed. I asked him to give the other fellows a message from me. I said that I expected to be spoken to if they were within hailing distance. If they didn't recognize me, I would leave no doubt in their mind as to how I would recognize them — and in their own language! He said, "Yes sir, I'll tell them." I waited to see what would happen.

Several days later I was crossing the campus during a class change. I spotted a black student coming toward me in the company of three white students. I fixed my eyes on him and, as we drew closer, looked at him with a smile of recognition. He quickly said, "Hello sir," and hurried by. But that had broken the ice. The next afternoon during lunch break, I placed myself outside of West College and waited for someone to come by. Most of the students used the short cut which passed in front of the building. Again I saw a black in the company of white students coming my way. This time I called him and said I'd like to speak to him. His companions hesitated, looked at me curiously, and then proceeded on their way. He was obviously discomfited, but polite. I engaged him in some conversation for about two minutes and shortly, along came two more. I stopped them too. In about five minutes we formed a small group of some six blacks, standing together between West College and Nassau Hall. That was the first of many similar meetings in the same spot.

Toward the end of the year, the second incident occurred that helped to define my role as a black administrator. I was sent for by the Dean of the College who said there was a problem that he hoped I could help with. Three black students were in danger of being flunked out, a freshman and two sophomores. One of the sophomores was the other black on the football team, who had been slated for a starting position the next season. An average student as a freshman, he had slumped badly in the spring term and no one could find out why. He had refused to disclose anything of consequence, even to the football coaches. The other two also had suddenly seemed to stop functioning after good beginnings. When they were told of the possibility of dismissal, they had accused the university of inadequate assistance and a poor climate for study. Although they did not use the word, the implication was "discrimination." Repeated efforts on the part of various administrators had elicited no further information. This was a potentially harmful situation for an administration that was trying carefully to introduce a change of image. I agreed to see the students, if they wanted to see me.

All three students agreed to meet with me and we began to get things cleared up. The sophomore football player had been quietly married for about a year. His wife was pregnant and living with relatives about 50 miles away from Princeton. He had been spending weekends with her and this had cut into his study time. Since in those days the university made no provisions for married undergraduate housing, he was faced with a support problem. In fact, a few students had left school because of their inability to take care of both their family responsibilities and their studies. The footballer was in a dilemma and had not felt that the coaches or other authorities would understand or wish to help if they knew his circumstances.

The other two failing students had come from strong black community and family settings. They felt that Princeton offered them nothing in the way of personal definition, and spent more time worrying about how to resolve the social situational scene than on their studies. Eventually, they were both succumbing to the alienation of the Princeton setting. Why hadn't they talked about this to anyone else? "Do you think a white man would know what we were talking about?"

All three cases called for policy decisions. Although not very big ones, they were important to the black student community. The footballer was given permission to bring his

wife down and housing was arranged in the graduate student housing area. In addition, his financial aid was adjusted to cover rent and expenses. The other two students were given permission to continue study at a recognized institution of their choice. Pending satisfactory performance there, they would be accepted back at Princeton later to continue their academic careers.

A major point had been made: the 'normal' Princeton scene was sometimes inimical to the interests of and progress of the black student. Moreover, several white student counselees reported similar experiences of feeling alienated from the Princeton scene. People were starting to realize the need for some change in this area.

DURING my second year at Princeton, I began to get to know the black community in town. Because I was an administrator — and thus part of "the system" — this was not as simple as it might sound. But gradually I succeeded in interesting some black townspeople in my concerns at the university: The need to establish a black presence on the campus. The need to find a way by which the black students who were there and those who were to come would have a more congenial atmosphere in which to study and be people in their own right. The need to establish firm ties between the black community on campus and that in the town, which I felt was a key element in the adjustment of black students to the university.

At first I encountered quite a bit of skepticism. Blacks I talked with hoped I would be successful, but they doubted I could make a dent in the armor of the Princeton hierarchy. It just wasn't in the cards for the white establishment to let a black man, no matter how capable, change the pattern of things. I kept talking to people, however, and eventually we worked out a plan. I would get the names of the incoming black students as early as possible before the start of the academic year. Each participating family would select a student to sponsor and assist in any way it saw fit. I would write to the students explaining the program and telling them that it was a voluntary effort on the part of the community to see to it that they had a home away from home. I would also send a letter to the parents of the incoming students informing them of this effort on the part of the university and the community. The students would be contacted by the family sponsors either before they arrived or as soon after as possible. It was simple but wholeheartedly backed by the black community.

By spring, I had written a proposal extending this idea to include selected white students as well as blacks in the family sponsor plan. I showed it to Brad, who was very interested and said he would pass it along to the Dean. I was informed about a week later that I had been invited to present the proposal to an administrative committee headed by the Dean. This group would approve or disapprove the idea depending upon how they saw the need for such action. I got a run-down from Brad on the composition of the committee, who was liberal and who was conservative. This was to be the next test of the role of the black administrator. It was again a policy decision that would affect not only the lives of the black students, but mine as well, as far as Princeton was concerned.

The meeting was held in the Dean's office in Nassau Hall. It was the first such gathering I had attended, and I was tuned to a high pitch, ready for anything that came down the pike. Everyone was relaxed and friendly in his greeting. That's the Princeton way. No matter how important the issue might be, at the beginning of things, everyone is relaxed and informal. It can be very deceptive to the newcomer. For once that meeting gets underway, you better damn well know which end is up.

My proposal was the last item on the agenda. I sat through what was to me a lot of meaningless talk. All my thoughts were on the plan and how I would handle it. Finally it was my turn and the Dean, after a few introductory remarks, put me

... They all had copies of the proposal so I was brief and to the point in expanding on what I considered to be the necessity for such a program. I referred to my experience as a counselor for freshman students and the observations I had made as to the effect of the Princeton climate on those who came from a different milieu. I trotted out the socio-psychological implications of alienation on students and the reasons why the university should take cognizance of this phenomenon. This took me about 15 minutes. There was a moment of silence and then the questions and comments began to come. Direct, hard, searching. Didn't this sound like an attempt to spoon feed and mollicoddle the Princeton student? How could I be so sure of my assumptions about the Princeton student? I hadn't been around long enough to know what I was talking about. Where would I get these family sponsors from? Maybe I could depend on the white community, but where did I get the idea that I could get anything from the black community?

I responded as calmly as I could, noting that I was a trained observer of human behavior with 15 years of counseling experience behind me. The Princeton student was no different from any other person when he was in emotional or mental conflict. I had been a member of the university's counseling staff for almost two years. I had had ample time to talk with and find out about most of the students that were a part of my case load. I had discussed my observations with others who had been on the campus longer than I and they had shared my views that something should be done to try to make the problems of adjustment to Princeton easier.

Then the attack on the proposal became more direct and, at the same time, more subtle. What about the black student at Princeton? Was I implying that he was not capable of keeping up academically? They had tried to select the best available. If there were complaints about the way they were treated, why hadn't this come to the attention of the authorities before now? What made me think that I understood the problems of blacks better than anyone else in the room? A Princeton student was a Princeton student, not white or black! He was selected from among the upper 5 percent of the country. One member even voiced the hope that my proposal would not go beyond the walls of that room.

In spite of myself, I exploded. I told them that I had every

right to speak for the black students because I was a black man. I knew about the situation they were living through because I had had a similar experience during my own college days. No, they would not be aware of the feelings of the black student because no one could express them for fear that he would be considered trying to cop out from academic rigor. I stated flatly and unequivocally that no one in the room had more knowledge about the black student than I did and, if they thought they did, they were under an illusion. There were black families of substance in the community and they were as interested in assisting the black students as much as whites were interested in assisting their own kind. I didn't wonder that they had no real knowledge of the black community because they probably had made little or no attempt to find out about those "good colored people" down Witherspoon Street. As I finished the blast, I looked over at Brad. He had a grim expression on his face. I said to myself, "Okay man, you've blown it." But I couldn't have cared less at that moment. I had been right in my earlier misgivings about taking this job. They were not interested in changing a damn thing. Well, they could shove it! I'd have no trouble finding another job.

There was a period of silence. Then, for the first time, Dean of the Faculty J. Douglas Brown '19, a beloved and respected teacher and administrator, quietly spoke up. He had years of experience in government and academic circles, was the reputed father of the nation's Social Security System, and was now approaching the end of a distinguished career at Princeton. He said that he had listened with great interest to the discussion and had read the proposal carefully. In his time he had seen a lot of Princeton students and there was some truth to my allegation about the lack of adjustment that some experienced. With a smile he remarked that he had good friends in the black community, but that he might not know as much about the community as he should. He felt that maybe I should not take on too many students at first, but that the proposal had merit and he for one would approve letting me try it out.

The atmosphere in the room suddenly became lighter. Dean Brown said he did not feel that white students needed the program, but if I wanted to pursue it with the black students, I could. He cautioned me to keep the committee informed about the progress of the program and not to hesitate to give up on it if it didn't work. I should report back to the group at the end of the year what the results had been. The meeting was adjourned. The men filed out of the room, some with a nod of the head in my direction, some with faint smiles, but I could sense no real hostility. Maybe a shade more respect for having stood firm and stated my case in a positive manner against a wave of negative reaction.

I walked over to Dean Brown, reached out to shake hands, and thanked him for his support. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye as he filled his pipe and said, "Well, I believe in giving a fellow a chance. We would not be where we are today if somebody hadn't taken a chance on something new. Do the best you can and good luck to you." I smiled back. He had read my thoughts accurately. Brad gave me a firm handclasp and we walked out of the room and over to our offices. He said that I had gained a valuable ally in Dean Brown and that he was sure that I would have no interference with the plan. He said that he would do all he could to help get the program off the ground. I nodded and went into my office, closed the door, and sank slowly into my chair. Another round won and I was still on the move. God surely was smiling in my direction. I murmured a silent prayer of thanks.

The summer was filled with feverish activity, getting the details of the program settled. Finally, everything was in place but one item. With the inception of this program, I felt that it was time for me to come out of the cocoon and appear as what I was: the black administrator of Princeton. During

By 1965, black attrition had been dramatically reduced



Freshman Week, I wanted to have a meeting with all of the new black students, with refreshments and all the other amenities that were common to special groups on the campus. I was prepared for a negative reaction and I got it. Wouldn't it look strange for the black students to be singled out for special meetings? No! Wouldn't they think that Princeton was being discriminatory right from the beginning? No! Why couldn't I have other, white administrators at the meeting? Because it was my idea and my meeting! Permission was finally given, albeit reluctantly.

That first meeting was memorable and historic in the life of the black student community. I had asked some of the black sophomores and juniors to be there to welcome their brothers. They all showed up. This was the largest group of blacks to come into a class at the same time — about 14 of them. They arrived in ones and twos, until finally the whole group was assembled. I introduced myself and there was visible astonishment on the faces of quite a few of them. A black administrator at Princeton? How come? How long? They were filled in on the details and then on the reasons for the Family Sponsor Program. Some of them had already been in touch with their families and the others had made arrangements to be picked up or make the first visit. I told them that, at the end of the week, there would be a party for old and new black students at the home of one of the black families. They all said they would be there and they were. The affair was held at the home of Jim and Fanny Floyd. Their oldest son, Jim Jr., had been admitted in the Class of '69. He was the first black resident of Princeton to be admitted to the university in about 20 years. His maternal grandfather had been head steward at one of the eating clubs for 30 years. When he retired, members of the club came from all over the United States to pay tribute to him. One of the first things that I was shown when I arrived on the campus was the picture of this beloved and respected gentleman, prominently displayed in the foyer of the club. Princeton's touch of democracy!

I still have a photograph showing all of the black students of the university sitting around the basement recreation room of the Floyds' house. I knew that things would never be the same again for any black student entering Old Nassau. One year later, the effect of the program spoke for itself: all of the entering freshmen had passed and were now sophomores. This had never happened before. The failure rate among black newcomers to the university had been about 50 percent. The black community had come through and the whole administration knew that the plan had proven itself.

THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1966-67 was to mark the coming of age of the black presence on the Princeton campus. By September of 1966, there were 41 black undergraduates of all shades and sizes. The incoming black freshmen were now being greeted by an enthusiastic group of black students and black community people. Black parents who accompanied their sons to school were pleasantly surprised to find out that they didn't have to rush off because there were no rooms available around Princeton. They had accommodations in black homes. It was beginning to be a common sight to see groups of three or more blacks walking across the campus, deep in conversation or laughing and joking . . . more relaxed, more self-assured.

By the time the football season was half over, I sensed that the black students were beginning to think of coming together in a more organized fashion. I was well aware that organized groupings of black students had formed at some of the other Ivy League institutions. As a matter of fact, I had attended a couple of "soul meetings" at Yale and Harvard. I believe I'm correct in tracing the impetus for this movement to a group of black students from the South who had been members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. They were veterans of sit-ins, marches, jail confinements, etc. Their brand of organizing didn't quite get off the

ground, but it gave birth to the movement that saw black student organizations of all kinds become a part of every predominantly white campus in the country.

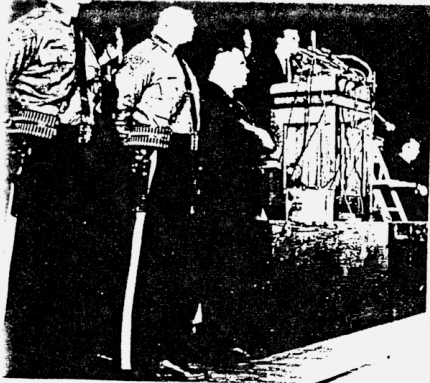
I was for organization, but not just any kind. In my mind, it had to have a form and purpose that would not only bring it visibility, but also create an effective force for positive change on the campus. As a result, there were long hours of conversation and discussion in my office and in dormitory rooms over a period of three to four months. I know that at times the black students thought I was being an obstructionist, maybe even a little bit of an Uncle Tom. But I had seen a lot of well-intentioned organizations go down the drain for lack of soundly developed goals and principles. If I could help it, that was not going to happen at Princeton. Timing and readiness were important words to me and I knew the significance of both to the university. From my off-hand probing of my colleagues, I knew that they were not ready.

Alabama Governor George Wallace had already begun his campaign for President, and his itinerary included many college campuses. His reception by groups of "radical" and black students during these appearances had furnished a lot of newsprint for him. Being an astute politician, he knew a good thing when he saw it and skillfully capitalized on these incidents. When we found out that he had been invited to speak at Princeton by the Whig-Clisosophic Society, the reaction was loud and swift. As one would expect, the campus was split into two broad groups: one advocating his right to be heard in conformance with democratic tradition, the other stating categorically that what he had to say they already knew and he did not need to repeat it at Princeton. I got wind that a group of students had invited some of the senior blacks to a meeting to discuss ways and means of developing a demonstration aimed at disrupting whatever Wallace was going to do or say. I checked up on the organizers and ascertained that they were among the radical-left students on the campus. This was serious.

I had met quite a few students and faculty who had participated in some of the protest marches in the South. They were honest and sincere advocates of freedom for all. But I must admit that I had seen little evidence that they had registered any impact on Princeton, either in the community or on the campus. They considered themselves to be exponents of the "Negro" cause, but this was the time, I reasoned, for blacks to speak for themselves. We were visibly among them, but they didn't see us. It was a situation that had its counterparts in many areas of the North.

I contacted the organizer of the meeting and told him that I wanted to attend. He seemed a little surprised, but said it was all right. I then called the two men who were going to represent the black students and suggested they not accept any proposal that was put forth at the meeting. I emphasized that we would have to wait and see if the tactics or plans devised were ones we could see ourselves carrying out. If not, we would have to discuss the proposals among ourselves. They concurred. I knew what was going to happen, but felt the students would have to have their own experience. During my tenure as director of education for the Urban League of Greater New York, I had acted as coordinator of a combined group of civil rights organizations, black and white. For years, some of the white groups had been in the forefront of the fight for equal rights for blacks and had had good success in their undertakings. It came as a shock, in one crucial situation involving the struggle for school integration, when the black caucus of this group decided that they would take the lead in stating their case and deciding how it should be handled. The black caucus made its point over the protestations of the white members who failed to understand that the time had come when blacks had to speak for themselves as principals, not as bystanders. The group was never the same.

The campus meeting involved about 15 people, both students and faculty. The organizers began to describe their



During his campus appearance in 1967, Governor Wallace was taken aback by the black students' dignified walkout

plan of action. It was nothing new: placards denouncing Wallace, attempts at confrontation, planned interruption of his speech — these tactics had all been used before and Wallace had always come off on top. After the presentation, I suggested that this was not the best way to deal with the situation and that it certainly would not help the cause of black students to be involved in proceedings that could result in a fracas with the local police and state troopers. The organizers listened politely but rejected my suggestions on the grounds that the blacks on campus had not had the experience that they had in handling situations of this kind and that they might be guided by those who had. This was what I had expected. The black student representatives were first amazed and then angry at the implication of their inadequacy. They stated their opinions clearly and forcefully. They said that they would go back to their group and discuss the situation and plan. They would let the organizers know of their decision. The organizers were upset. If black students did not join with them, the validity of their position would be in question. After all, this was being done on behalf of the black cause for freedom and justice. I then made a statement myself, explaining that the time had come when blacks at Princeton had to speak for themselves and decide for themselves the proper course of action. Neither they nor any white group could preempt that responsibility. Blacks were on the campus and they were there to stay. After that, I left the meeting, followed by the two black students.

A report was made to the other black students and their reaction was one of deep resentment. A general discussion ensued about what to do. After a while, I pointed out that we had to keep two objectives in mind: first, that our action did not directly or indirectly feed Wallace's assertion that "nigras" were among his good friends but not necessarily accountable for their emotional reaction to things they did not understand; second, that whatever we did had to have an impact on the campus that would give us the opportunity to do other things after Wallace had gone. I reminded them that we were not representing ourselves alone, but the other black people of the community as well. They decided to form a committee to work out details and then further meetings of the whole group would be held.

What emerged was beautiful in its simplicity and directness. We would print our own handbills to pass out to the crowd. These would state, among other things, that if Alabama was symptomatic of the kind of administration we could expect from Wallace, not only blacks but everybody else would be in trouble. We would borrow a loudspeaker and play freedom songs interspersed with the poetry of Countee Cullen, Douglas, and others. We would start this

about an hour before Wallace was to enter the hall. The students would dress in dark clothes and sit in a body close to the front of the auditorium. If, during his speech, Wallace were to make statements deemed biased and prejudicial to the interests of black people, the students would rise quietly and leave the auditorium without comment. It sounded too simple to some, but I told them that at times the simplest things were the most effective. We agreed to adopt this plan and informed the white group that we were going to do our own thing. They didn't like it, but there was nothing they could do about it.

The speech was to begin at 8 p.m. Our activities would begin at 7. Until then, we would go about our usual business. The white student group went through its familiar patterns. Petitions to President Goheen asking him to call off the meeting. Groups of chanting, placard-waving students in motley dress, parading through the campus. A rally was to be held before and after Wallace's speech in front of Whig-Clio. The campus atmosphere was tense. Everyone knew that security measures would be tight.

The crowd began to gather outside of Dillon Gym at about 6:45. The doors were supposed to open at 7 but, probably for security reasons, didn't until 7:30. Our loudspeaker was positioned in the window of a dorm that faced the square in front of the entrance. We went into motion on the dot and had a captive audience. The students quietly distributed the handbills. The music was familiar and stirring. The poetry was read in clear, forceful, dramatic tones. The crowd was being entertained and informed of black opinion. Wallace entered the gym almost unnoticed. Coup number one! Just before 8, the black students moved into the auditorium and took their seats. They were beautifully visible! Just before Wallace was introduced, a member of the white student group attempted to leap on the platform and grab the microphone for an inflammatory speech to the audience. He was unceremoniously hustled off by the police. The crowd settled down. The introductions were made and the speech began.

It was the same old speech. Complimentary remarks about Princeton and its place in the nation's history. Some quips about the students who had demonstrated earlier in the day and the incident preceding his speech. Standard fare intended to give him a feel for the audience. I had read the text of most of his speeches with great care. I had clued the students as to about where he would launch into his comments about blacks. It usually occurred about two-thirds of the way through his speech. In other university appearances, this was the point at which student demonstrations or interruptions would occur. He would then treat this with a very cavalier

attitude and the audience would usually go along with him in the interest of fair play. It was a good ploy.

The audience was politely attentive. When Wallace came to the part of his speech that attacked the black community, the black students waited a moment for him to get into it and then, as if at a command, rose and proceeded to file out of the auditorium. No gestures. No comments. A quiet, dignified repudiation of bigotry. The eyes of the audience followed them. Wallace was taken aback. Say something! Give me a chance to explain! But they moved to the exit and vanished.

The next day the campus, indeed the whole community, was buzzing about the way the black students had handled themselves. My phone was ringing all day long. The black community: we were proud of the way the students handled the situation. The campus administration: the black students handled a difficult situation with dignity and directness. The white community: the black students gave an effective denial to the Wallace message. The white students: where the hell did all those black guys come from? Are they Princeton? Black had become more significant than orange. The black students were enthusiastic: for the first time, they had done something as a group. White students were stopping them to inquire how they had come up with the idea. Then the black students started asking themselves, "What next?"

NOW WAS THE TIME to talk about organization. We had something to follow up on. It's not uncommon for student organizations to spring up overnight on a college campus. In fact, it is expected and accepted as part of the educational experience. But a black group on a white campus like Princeton had to have presence. Just announcing its formation was not going to do the trick. There had to be another ingredient. Previously, I had brought a group of administrators from black colleges to Princeton for a conference on the problems their institutions encountered in attracting black and white students. The Princeton community had been impressed with their knowledge and understanding of nationwide academic problems. It was the first meeting of its kind at Princeton. What if we were to follow that with the first conference of black students from predominantly white institutions to discuss their role in directing their own future?

I broached the idea to the black student group. What? A conference of black students at Princeton? Why not? Do you know of a better way to put your organization in motion and bring Princeton to the attention of other black students at the same time? Do you know of a better way to rid Princeton of its reputation as "the plantation" for black students? Okay. Let's get moving!

What the students did not know was that I had already checked out the possibility of the university's sponsoring a conference on a topic relevant to blacks. I had been told that the custom was to have a member of the faculty who was an expert on the subject serve as chairman. Since there was no "expert" that they knew of, the University Conference Committee could not fund such an undertaking. I knew then that we would have to do whatever we wanted out of our own resources. It had been decided earlier that the announcement of the formation of a black student group on campus would be made two weeks before the conference. There were long debates over the name that the group should carry. We finally decided on "The Association of Black Collegians."

I knew there would be one difficulty. Princeton was an "open campus." That meant no person was to be denied membership in any club, organization, or facility because of race, color, religion, etc. Once a person was admitted to Princeton, he became a "son of Old Nassau" and that was that. I admired the principle, but knew that in practice there were nuances and subtleties which acted as inhibiting factors to black students. Princeton was a white institution and system. No black could lay claim to anything that the univer-

sity represented without validity. In order for the black presence at Princeton to have an ongoing, defining role in future development, there had to be a way by which blacks could break their own ground, plant their own roots and create their own systems that would become indigenous to the university in the hearts and minds of the community. This was the position from which I argued the case for a black student association and for a conference to be sponsored by it in the name of Princeton.

I worked my way up the official ladder. First Brad, my immediate superior, then the Dean, finally the President. The sessions were tough. I asked no quarter and they gave none. There were hard, critical, searching questions as to motivation and intent. Despite some misgivings, in the end they agreed to give it the support that was necessary. One of the things that I have always remembered about the men who held the top positions at Princeton was the quality of fairness and openmindedness they exhibited when it came to upholding the integrity of the university.

I had figured out a method of handling the costs of the conference that would make it unnecessary for the university to contribute anything but its facilities. All possible expenses were carefully calculated. I reasoned that, if it became known that Princeton black students were sponsoring a conference dealing with the concerns of black people in higher education, no institution would turn down the opportunity to send representatives from their own black student organizations. Therefore, we could charge them a delegate fee to cover the costs of the students they sent. When I put this to the Dean, he raised his eyebrows. I argued that if a letter went out over his signature to fellow deans at the institutions we had selected, I didn't see them not supporting him or Princeton. He said that it was worth a try. We mailed it to over 50 institutions selected by the students who knew where the black organizations were on white campuses. In addition, we invited several predominantly black institutions to send representatives under the same terms. The students had been on the job. Either by phone or in person, they had reached all of the black student organizations and informed them about the conference. They reported that the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Most of them didn't believe that it would take place. Princeton? My God!

It would take about two weeks for the responses to come back, if they were going to come at all. In the meantime, we kept on with the details. Getting the conference space. Arrangements for housing 200 students for two days. Arrangements for feeding them. Selecting speakers. Providing entertainment. Setting up panel topics. Deciding on student panel chairmen.

After a week, I could sense the tension mounting among the students. Maybe the invitations had gone astray. Maybe the schools were unwilling to pay the delegate fees. Maybe we should have started with a smaller effort that would have been assured of success. Maybe we should have copied what other black organizations had done and given a "soul party," with a few people asked to speak but not make things too "heavy." To the students, I maintained an outwardly calm and optimistic manner. Of course things would work. Patience. We were going to do this the Princeton way and give it the seriousness it deserved. Away from the students, I had the same misgivings. My poor wife bore the brunt of my anxiety. She did for me what I was doing for the students. If she had any doubts, she kept them to herself.

Two of the student leaders of the ABC, as we were to be known, were sitting in my office when the mail came with the first responses. I opened two of the letters and began to laugh. Of course they would be delighted to participate in the conference; enclosed was a check for two delegates. I passed the letter over to the students. Slow grins began to spread over their faces. Then they let go. We shook hands. Laughed. Shook hands again. John Danielson stuck his head in the

door. I told him about the responses. He grinned broadly, came into the room, and there was another round of hand shaking and back slapping. The students left to spread the news, and I hustled into Brad's office and told him that we were in. He gave his congratulations and said he would pass the word on to the Dean. After that, there was a steady stream of acceptances. Out of the 50 schools we had invited, 41 were sending delegates.

Two weeks before the conference, the *Daily Princetonian* carried the report of the formation of a new student group on campus, the Association of Black Collegians. It was a good, factual story, giving the reasons for the formation of the group and listing the names of the officers. We all waited for the reaction. The black community approved wholeheartedly of this development. The white community was quiet. What was this? Why did they have to have their own association? The administration, by and large, made no comment. The students reported that they were stopped on the campus or visitors came to their rooms to talk about this new development. What about this conference? Could interested white students attend? Wasn't this reverse discrimination?

About the same time, I decided to act on an idea that had been forming in my mind for about two weeks. "Come high



Mevin R. McCray '74

or stay away," the craps shooters used to say. I was coming high! We needed someone to open the conference and welcome the delegates. We needed the mark of overt, total acceptance of what we were doing and what we represented to Princeton. Who could give us that? Who else but President Goheen. When I told the students of my decision, they were incredulous. They told me that I had been working too hard. If I thought he would open the conference, I was really "way out." Sure, they would like to have him do it. No president of any white college had ever attended, much less opened, any affair given by its black student organization.

I called and asked for an appointment. This was to be my second visit to the President's Office in the three years I had been at Princeton. After exchanging greetings, I wasted no time in getting to the topic. I explained the importance of this to the students and why I felt it was also important to the university. Goheen listened carefully with that little furrow between his eyes that was characteristic of him when he was concentrating on a problem of importance to the university. When I finished, he said that he was pleased that the students wanted him to be present on the occasion, but the time was so short that he wouldn't be able to prepare a speech. In addition, he already had a commitment for that afternoon and had planned to leave early. I told him that he would not have to

make a major speech. Five minutes of his presence was all that was necessary. He said that he would think it over and let me know his decision within a day.

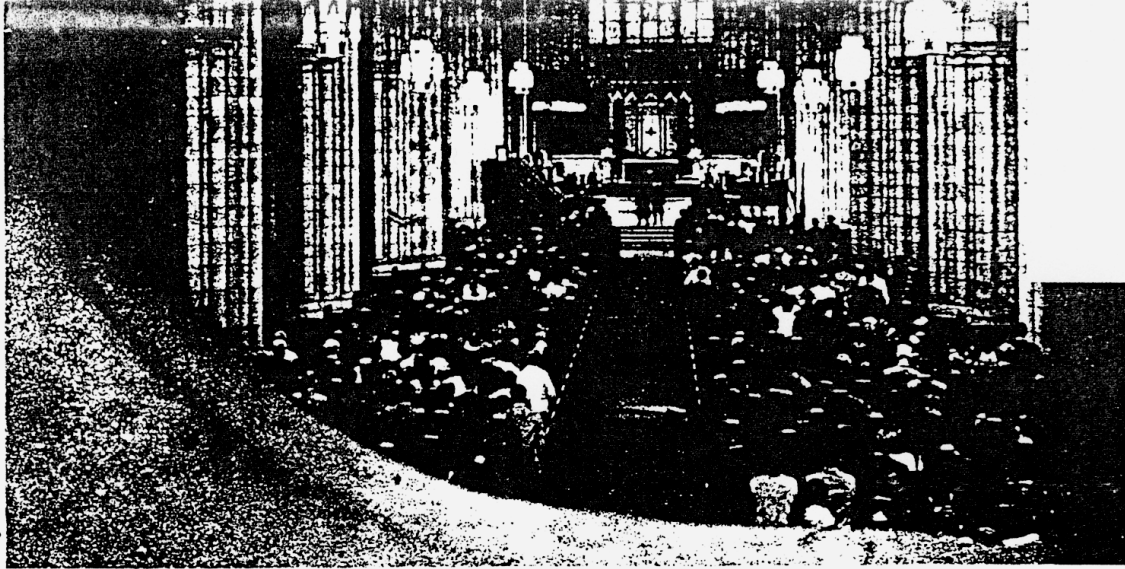
Goheen called me the next day and said he would open the conference on the understanding that he would not be giving a speech, but saying a few words of welcome to the assembled delegates. Fine! Thank you! I hopped around the office in glee, then went straight to the Dean's office, told him the news, and asked whether he would be available to open the second day of the conference and introduce the black speaker who would be giving the major address. He said he would be delighted!

I ran down to my office, taking the steps two at a time. When I passed the word on to the students they couldn't believe it. Was I sure? When they were convinced I wasn't joking, bedlam broke loose. But there was another effect that I had been looking for and it came. They quieted down and began to talk about the fact that now they had to make the conference a success. They were really on the line! Suddenly the tremendous importance of what they were about to do struck all of them. I knew then that we were on target.

March 30, 1967, was a beautiful day in Princeton. The delegates were arriving and their hosts were taking care of room assignments in an efficient manner. The programs were on hand. Everything was going according to plan. Three ABC leaders had been assigned to escort President Goheen to the Wilson School Auditorium. The rest of the black students were lined up just inside the building as he came up the steps. I was standing to one side and could see his expression as he came through the door. It was one of surprise and pleasure. He had never seen all of the black students of the university together before. I introduced each to him by name and he shook hands with all of them. They were a fine looking group and they had a dignity all their own, befitting the occasion. We moved into the auditorium and, again, Goheen was struck with surprise and pleasure. He was gazing into the faces of 200 black students representing the cream of the institutions on the Eastern Seaboard. There were also several white administrators in the audience, like marshmallows on a chocolate sea.

I introduced President Goheen and there was a murmur of approval throughout the audience. They greeted him with polite applause. Seated to one side, I could see the two or three small cards that held the notes he was using. Okay. I had five minutes. I was looking out at the audience when suddenly I became aware that something had happened. The script was off-key. I glanced back at the cards in Goheen's hand and realized that he wasn't referring to them at all. I looked at his face and realized that this was no perfunctory greeting of welcome to Princeton. He had taken off! For the next 30 minutes, he held the audience in rapt attention as he spelled out his own convictions about the necessity of equality of opportunity at all levels of society and especially in the sphere of education. He acknowledged the inequities of the past, but urged the students to look forward to the future, to make the most of their opportunity to gain an education that would help them to be in the vanguard of new achievements and progress for their people and for the nation as a whole. Every eye was glued on him. They were taking in every word. When he finished, there was an outpouring of applause. In one spontaneous motion, the audience rose to its feet and rocked the Wilson School Auditorium with a tribute that I have seldom seen accorded a white man by a black group. It was from the heart and expressed appreciation for not the mere words but the feelings from the heart and soul of the man. He rose and waved his hand at the group, a quivering smile on his lips. He was moved! The conference was off to a great start. The black students of Princeton watched him with pride as he moved out of the auditorium. He was their President! They were Princeton!

(To be continued next week.)



Congregation sings "We Shall Overcome" at memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King in University Chapel, April 9, 1968

A Time of Adjustment

The early years of the black and minority presence at Princeton—Part II

CARL A. FIELDS

BY THE FALL OF 1967, the Association of Black Collegians, or ABC as it was now known by everyone, was firmly entrenched in the Princeton scene. The success of its conference the previous spring, which had drawn 200 black students and administrators from 41 Eastern colleges and universities, had contributed immensely to ABC's reputation as a positive force on the campus. Furthermore, the black townspeople who were participating in the Family Sponsor Program now began a series of meetings with the dean of the college that was to be a significant milestone in relations between the black community and the university administration. Here I must pay tribute to Edward Sullivan, who had assumed the deanship in 1966, for it was largely through his open-mindedness and sensitivity of spirit to the plight of deprived minorities that much of the progress of the next few years was to take place.

In last week's installment, Carl A. Fields described how he became the university's first black administrator, and reviewed the events leading up to the formation of the Association of Black Collegians 10 years ago. In this concluding segment, he continues his account to the establishment of the Third World Center and his departure to become planning officer of the University of Zambia in 1971. Both parts were adapted from his book, Black in Two Worlds, which compares his experiences at Princeton and in Africa. Today Fields runs his own African Technical Educational Consultant Service and also serves as a consultant for a number of educational institutions in this country. — Ed.

Toward the end of the first semester, a group of Jewish students came to my office to ask if I would assist them in the formation of a Jewish student association. It seemed that the emergence of ABC was encouraging other minorities on campus to become visible in their own right. I was terribly intrigued by this state of affairs. For years, whenever a member of another minority group had proclaimed sympathy and oneness with blacks, I had said it was not the same thing. Irish, Jew, Italian, Greek, or whatever, he had the benefit of what I termed "protective coloration." As long as he was white or looked like he was white, he had an advantage no black person could claim. This is what had given rise to the light-complexioned black's tendency to "pass."

I will always remember the concern that one of my colleagues (a member of another minority group) expressed at the tactics I was beginning to develop in my first few years at Princeton. He constantly cautioned me against being too obvious about what I was as a black. I used to tell him, and anybody else who was interested, that I saw no reason to make believe I was something other than a black man. Who would believe me anyway? I could speak a foreign language, wear different clothes, or marry someone from a different culture. If I looked black, I was black. And, in this country at least, that was that. (Very few whites will ever understand the mystique that surrounded a man like Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr., who looked white, but talked and acted black!)

Nonetheless, the Jewish students had come to seek my assistance, and I was glad to help them in whatever they de-

cided was right to do so long as it was in the interest of a better Princeton. As we talked, I discovered that they were concerned about the exacerbation of relations between blacks and Jews then occurring in the nation's urban centers, especially Eastern cities like New York and Philadelphia. They wanted to bring together Jewish students from other Eastern universities to discuss what they could do about lessening interracial tension and creating better understanding on their campuses and in the cities. I suggested James Farmer, former director of CORE, as a speaker, and he agreed to come. The conference was planned as a two-day affair in early April, beginning on Friday with a Sabbath service. I was invited to the service and worshipped and fellowshiped with the students and their guests as the only black man in the congregation.

On the way home that evening, I heard the news of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. My wife and I had been invited to a party that night. We decided to go. About a dozen other people were there. All of us were shaken by the news and sat in quiet conversation about what it would portend for the future of the country.

The next morning, I met with the Jewish students to discuss the effect of this tragedy on their program. They decided to forego the planned events and ask Farmer to speak to a larger assemblage, including black and white students from both the university and the community. He readily consented, and his reflections on the life and times of Dr. King and the need to carry out the work he had started fitted in perfectly with the theme of the conference. Jim is a gifted orator and, when he finished speaking, those in the congregation linked hands and sang *We Shall Overcome* with a spirit of dedication and feeling that I think few of them had ever experienced before.

On Monday I met with the leaders of ABC. The group had worked through the weekend formulating plans for a memorial tribute to Dr. King. On the day of the funeral service they wanted to hold seminars on campus, led by black students, but open to the entire academic community. They felt that this was a propitious moment for a sober discussion of race relations, justice, and equality for all men. They asked me if I would contact President Goheen for permission to hold this kind of memorial instead of having classes. I agreed to carry out their wishes.

Though deeply moved by the tragedy of Dr. King's death, Goheen had his own ideas about the kind of memorial that was fitting to his life and works. Dr. King had spoken at the University Chapel on a couple of occasions and had made a profound impression on all who had heard him. Goheen felt the best way for black and white students to honor Dr. King was to carry on with the academic work of the university and thereby prepare themselves for the opportunities he had advocated. A memorial service had already been planned which the whole community could attend. Goheen knew that I had been asked to deliver the eulogy and that black students would have a prominent part in the service. He felt that this was enough.

I conveyed his decision to ABC. The students were incensed at what they regarded as an insensitivity on the part of the president for their feelings in this matter. I had warned him that his decision might evoke a strong reaction from the ABC, but he felt that reason would prevail. I didn't know what they were going to do, and it's a good thing that I didn't: I might have felt constrained to interfere, which would have been a serious mistake.

The next morning, I was called to the dean's office for an urgent meeting. We were informed that ABC had marched, in a body, to the president's home at about 11:00 p.m. and asked him to reconsider his decision. They told him that they, as black people, had deep feelings about what had occurred which he didn't seem to understand. They said they were making this appeal in respect for him and his office before



Arms linked in vigil for Dr. King

they took any other action. If he did not agree to call off classes for the day as they had requested, however, they would be forced to use other means to close down the campus. Goheen listened carefully to the group's spokesmen and sensed that they indeed felt they were being driven to a course of action which would go beyond the conventional bounds. He had always reacted negatively to threats, either direct or implied. But this was not an ordinary situation and his response was tempered accordingly. He promised that they would have his decision the next morning.

All of the top administration was very upset by the black students' action. I pointed out that in comparison with what had been happening at other universities, they had behaved with considerable restraint. They could have wrecked the campus first and talked afterwards. Instead, they had acted like responsible members of the community. Did I have any clues as to what they might do if the president remained firm on his original decision? No, I didn't have the faintest idea. Would I try to persuade them to accept the president's decision? No, I would not.

About an hour later, I received a call from the president's office and went over to see him. Goheen let me know that he considered the black students' action a severe breach of conduct and propriety. Under other circumstances, he would have felt compelled to take swift disciplinary action. But he was impressed by the intense concern of the group and the symbolic importance of its request. So he had decided to suspend regular classes and allow the ABC seminars to be carried on instead. He insisted that there be no coercion, however; attendance must be on a voluntary basis. I agreed to pass his decision on to the students.

On the day of Dr. King's funeral, I was sent as a representa-

tive from Princeton to the services in Atlanta. The seminars were held in a commendable fashion, and attendance was high. Not every student and faculty member took part, but there was genuine agreement from those who did that it was a worthwhile experience.

Later in the week, ABC announced that it would hold an hour-long silent vigil at Palmer Square in honor of Dr. King. When I arrived, about half-way through the hour, approximately 200 people were standing there. As I got closer, I could see that the inner circle was all black. Students from the university and young people from the town were gripping hands across their bodies. Tight lipped. Grim faced. Silent. Some with heads bowed. Some looking straight ahead with motionless eyes. Surrounding them was a group of white students and adults, all silent. The only movement was the shuffling of feet as people slipped in or out of the crowd. I looked around from the outside and then moved closer to the black ring. It was impressive. A show of solidarity in a visible way that Princeton had never seen before. Black people standing together, honoring a black leader.

I became conscious of a young, white teenager, hovering close to me and close to the ring. I looked at her and saw tears streaming down her cheeks, her shoulders shaking with barely controlled sobbing. She raised her head and spoke out loud to no one in particular. "Why can't I join the circle and hold hands? I loved Dr. King. He spoke for me too!" By God, she was right! I thought back to the March on Washington in August 1963, when Dr. King had stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial. He had spoken of a day that would see all men, regardless of color, joining hands in brotherhood to fight for justice, equality, and freedom. Black brotherhood and unity, yes — but not until there was a joining with other kinds of brotherhood and unity would all be free! I reached out and grabbed the hand of the girl, moved between two black students, grasped the hand of the one on my right, and looked over at the other. His eyes were resentful, his body tensed. We looked at each other for what seemed like a long time. Then he reached for the outstretched hand of the white girl and resumed his stance. Jesus, there's still a lot to overcome!

AFTER THAT WEEK, things returned to normal; students went back to their classes, professors taught, administrators administered. But the new, vibrant, black presence on the campus had made its mark. Black concerns were receiving increased attention in university publications. Black students held their heads high as they walked across the campus or through the streets of the town. It looked good and felt good.

At the same time, I was getting restless and was beginning to think about leaving the university. I had been at Princeton four years now, and there were other jobs to do and other ways that I could profitably spend my time. In fact, I had already been contacted about a number of new opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, Princeton was a closed corporation as far as I was concerned. So one morning in late April I went to Brad Craig '38, my immediate superior at the Bureau of Student Aid, and told him of my decision to leave. He got about as upset as I had ever seen him. He said that he thought I was being premature. There were still things to be done here. Was I unhappy? Had anything happened that he was unaware of? I leveled with him. After I finished, he asked me to give him time to talk it over with the dean. I agreed.

A few days later, I was called to Dean Sullivan's office. He told me that leaving now would create a real gap in the work that I was doing. I reminded him that there was now another black in the Bureau of Student Aid who could carry on. I had shared with him just about all that I had been doing. Sullivan asked me to defer any final decision until he had talked with the president. Again I agreed. By this time I was getting interested in what might come up. If I were going to stay, however,

I wanted a position where I would be able to participate in policy making. I had said little about this because, from where I sat, it seemed too far out for Princeton to consider.

My next meeting was with President Goheen. He listened carefully to my reasons for wanting to leave, and then asked what it would take to get me to stay. After I told him, he said he would like to think some things over. In the meantime, would I agree not to make any definite moves? I concurred. The following week, he called me back to his office and said he thought he had a position that would interest me. Would I consider assistant dean of the college as being in the realm of what I wanted?

Now it was my turn to ask for time to think things over. He was quick to pick up on this. Was there anything else? After all, if I accepted I would become the first black dean in Princeton's history. Yes, I was aware of that, but what would it mean? He looked somewhat puzzled. I explained that the position was great, but in order for it to mean something to black and white people inside and outside of the university, I had to represent not just a position but clout. Like what? Well, I had observed that the university had no machinery set up to deal with the human relations aspect of higher education. I accepted the fact that a university was a community of scholars, but scholars were also people. We agreed to have further talks on the matter.

I had another meeting with Dean Sullivan, who said he would be pleased to have me as one of his assistants. He laughed as he remarked that he had never dreamed of becoming a dean at Princeton because he thought he came from the wrong side of the tracks. Now I was to be his assistant. Princeton would never be the same with an Irishman and a black working together. I joined in his amusement.

Two days later, I was in the president's office again. He had decided to offer me the chairmanship of his newly created University Human Relations Committee. In that role, I would also be entitled to sit on the Administrative Policy Committee. I knew what that meant. I didn't waste any more time. I accepted both positions. It was agreed that the official announcement would be held off until just before graduation.

I was still reveling in the idea of the new position when something else occurred to me. The 1968 commencement exercises would see the largest number of black students receiving a Princeton diploma in its history — all eight of those who had entered four years before. Two of them had been outstanding in their leadership. Something should be done to recognize the time and effort they had put into making the university a better place for black and white students alike. I fanned through the records of past commencement and awards exercises, and found that no black student had ever been given an honor for service to Princeton.

If black students had contributed to the advancement and development of Princeton through service to other students and the community, why shouldn't they be recognized for their efforts? If, as we had maintained, the black culture, with its own virtues and qualities, had been proven to be a vital ingredient in the recent history of the university, why not recognize it? I took my proposal up the administrative ladder, and everyone approved. The remaining question was whom should we name the award after? I suggested four black leaders I thought might be appropriate, and we decided on Frederick Douglass. The others were either too current or too controversial. Even though Douglass, along with DuBois, was being widely quoted by black militants, he had respectability in academic circles for his acute, scholarly analysis of the status of black people.

Through friends of mine, I located the sculptress Inge Harrison and bought two busts of Frederick Douglass to be given to the award winners. When the dean asked me if I wanted to make the presentation, I told him that he should do it. He had been very close to this group of students, had cooperated almost beyond the call of duty, and the award should be seen as

one coming from the top ranks of the administration on behalf of the entire university.

On Class Day, Dean Sullivan announced that the Frederick Douglass Award for the student who had exhibited, through his service, the highest principles of Princeton and a dedication to black ideals of progress and advancement would be shared by two recipients. As Paul Williams and Deane Buchanan came down from the bleachers flanking Cannon Green and walked forward to receive the honor, the assembled students, understanding its significance, rose as one body, black and white, in rousing ovation. I stood there, choking back tears and watching this Princeton crowd cheering the accomplishments of black students.

BEFORE ASSUMING my new position, I called in the ABC leaders and told them what I thought was going to happen. Once I became more involved in administration and policy, I would not be as close to them physically as I had in the past. As a result, I would be more open to question about what I represented and how much in tune I still was with their situation. In our terms, that meant "how black" you still were — a phrase that had infinite meaning within black society. If the ABC leaders had not understood how my new role would change our relationship, affecting their role as well, I would have had serious reservations about taking the position. But they did.

Moving into the inner circle of an administration can be a tricky business for anyone, white or black. No matter what you have done previously, you are subject to certain pressures, some quite legitimate, to be like all the other insiders. If you remain too much, too obviously, an outsider, you run the risk of being labeled an "eccentric." That means the others will tolerate almost anything you do short of a felony and write it off as having no effect on what they or anyone else wants to do. There were in fact some people like that at Princeton. On the other hand, if you bought into everything, you would give up your influence and ability to promote change.

I had played it loose right from the jump; there was no point in tightening up now. I also recognized that the black administrator had to be a black educational statesman. While he had his own constituency to represent, there were other constituencies that he had to respond to as well. The "black cause" was a solid, forceful wedge to open the door, but you could be sure that, once it was open, other groups which had suffered the same deprivations would want and even demand the same opportunities that blacks had won. I can remember people telling me that if we did something for blacks, we would have to do it for everybody. To me, this was a curious admission that they had done it for precious few. My expectation was proved correct: before long I was approached by the Puerto Ricans, Chinese, American Indians, and other groups which believed they had a special right to be included in organizations or movements that would give them a stronger purchase at Princeton.

The first thing I took on was the university's admissions system. I argued that, if Princeton wanted to be a national institution, its student population should be representative of the nation. This was accepted in principle, but the admissions officers maintained that, even with their best efforts, they could not find that kind of representation. I argued that their criteria for achievement were not broad enough to include the kinds of things, other than academic marks, that blacks and other minorities could present as credentials. After several meetings, it was decided to include "work experience" — that is, real work experience of the kind necessary for survival — in addition to the kind that more affluent students did for other reasons.

With the broadening of the criteria for admission, I was confident that the numbers situation would take care of itself. The next thing I sought to convey to the top administration

was that the phenomenal success we had experienced in 1964-68 could not be expected to continue. The 98 percent retention rate was unreal. Eventually, black students at the university would exhibit all of the characteristics of the rest of the undergraduate population. No matter how careful the selection process, a certain number of students are always going to get into trouble for taking drugs, stealing, cheating on exams, etc. — blacks included. When there were enough blacks at Princeton so that some began to evince the aberrations common to other undergraduates, they should not be treated as people somehow beyond the pale. It was a good thing I had stressed this point because the first time a black was found definitely in the wrong, they were ready to throw the book at him. When I reminded them that his offense was no more heinous than that committed by the relative of a very prominent public official, they began to view it in proportion.

By 1968-69, a lot of things had begun to boil at American universities. Princeton was probably the only campus in the Ivy League, and one of the few predominantly white institutions in the country, that had not experienced a black student eruption. I knew we were due; the only question was what the issue would be. By that time, we had black representation on a number of student committees, so the blow point would have to be something else. The university's investment policy vis-à-vis companies doing business in places like South Africa had been a sore point with black students for a long time. They had requested a meeting with the Board of Trustees and had been given a chance to present their grievance. The board had listened and had been impressed with the sincerity of their presentation, but it refused their demand that the university sell its stock in all corporations with any operations or holdings in southern Africa. The trustees stood by their existing policy, which banned investment only in those companies that directly supported the governments of southern Africa or that had substantial operations in the region. Though I was not surprised by the decision, I thought it significant that the board had given the black students an opportunity to present their case as Princetonians.

In early March, Rod Hamilton '69, the coordinator of ABC, came into my office for one of his frequent informal chats. He intimated that the students felt they should do something more about this issue. I inquired what they had in mind. Rod was very cagey and wouldn't commit himself, but wanted to know what my position would be if they took an "extreme action." I asked him the same thing I had asked his predecessors, "What are you going to do tomorrow?" His reply was along the lines of "If this is what the masses feel is good and necessary, this is where I am and this is what I do." My response was that the action had to come off clean and the group had to be able to follow up on it to some advantage. We left it at that.

About a week later, I was scheduled to give a lecture to a group of black students at the Theological Seminary. When I entered the class, the professor looked surprised and said he thought I would be over at the university. I asked why. He told me that the black students had taken over a building on the campus and, in view of the circumstances, he would understand if I wanted to get back to my office. As soon as I checked in, Dean Sullivan wanted to know if I would go down to the occupied building and talk to the students. I said that I didn't think so. He told me that President Goheen had ordered all responsible administrators to go there and try to get the kids out of the building. I replied that I was not responsible for them being there and thus saw no reason to go down there. I would wait in my office. If the students knew where I was, I felt sure they would contact me.

Joe Moore, a black native of Princeton who was an assistant dean of students, came in and told me what had happened. At 7 a.m., about 40-50 black students had entered New South Building (the location of the university's financial-

administrative offices), escorted out the one secretary who had already arrived for work, and locked the doors. So far they had been peaceful and orderly. They had announced that they were protesting the university's investment policy with regard to South Africa. Soon my phone rang and I picked it up. "Hey Doc, you know where we are?" the voice said. I recognized Rod's voice and said, "Yes, how are things going?" He said that they had things under control. Was I going to come down? No, what was the point? He didn't expect me to try to talk them out of there, did he? No! Well, I would wait until they got out and then we could talk. Yep! About five or six o'clock. Crazy! If I didn't see them that day, I would see them tomorrow. Just make sure that everything was left in good order! Sure, they'd see to that.

Shortly thereafter, Dan Coyle '38, an assistant to the president who also served as the university's public information officer, dropped in and asked what I thought of the situation. I told him the students felt that they had a legitimate case and that the university authorities had not taken them seriously. How soon would they be out? Probably about 6 p.m. Could he tell that to the president? Sure. Joe came by again to report that the SDS group had entered the building but had been asked to leave by ABC. Good — they had remembered. If it's your cause, you fight for it yourself. Once you've established the groundwork, then you can accept the help of others on your own terms.

The next day, Rod and the other ABC leaders were in my office. What did I think would happen to them? I really didn't know. What they had to do now was go back to their academic work and make sure that was covered. Don't give out any more statements than were absolutely necessary and make sure that all statements were checked for accuracy and authenticity. Give me time to check out the scene and the attitudes.

For the following days, I was involved in discussions with most of the top people in the administration. They were of the opinion that something would have to be done that would serve as a lesson to the rest of the student body. I inquired what they had in mind. Well, suspension, if not expulsion, from the university. On what grounds? Violations of univer-

sity rules and regulations. Where were those rules? The faculty had recently adopted a policy statement prohibiting demonstrations which "block the legitimate activities of any person on the campus or in any university building or facility." The policy stipulated that such violations, "if persisted in after due warning, will subject the participants to disciplinary and, if need be, legal action." But there was no precedent for applying the policy because no students had ever occupied a building at Princeton before. Furthermore, they had departed after a limited period of time, leaving the building in as good order as they had found it. University property had not been damaged. At most, they had stopped people from working for the day. Had they really disrupted university operations or interfered with university business to any great extent? The punishment should fit the crime. Ultimately, reason prevailed. A few students were put on disciplinary probation and the entire student body, black and white, was given warning that any similar action in the future could lead to suspension or expulsion from the university.

DURING THIS PERIOD, three other developments took place that were to be of material benefit to minority students and to Princeton as a whole. The first was a new orientation program for incoming blacks and other minority-group members, which was developed with the help of Joe Moore and Roberto Barragan, a young Cuban-American who had taken my former position at the Bureau of Student Aid. The rationale for it was simple. Generally speaking, minority students were alien to the life and traditions of a place like Princeton. Our task was to familiarize them, as rapidly as possible, with the customs, procedures, and social conditions that prevailed so they would be able to start out on an equal basis with students for whom the environs were less strange.

In effect, the family sponsor idea was brought inside, drawing on upperclassmen, faculty, and administrators as needed. It was particularly focused on those students who were planning to concentrate in science and engineering, for experience had shown that they were often the ones who encountered the most difficulty. After orientation, the students were followed in a variety of ways, and help was made readily available. Faculty was alerted to the effort and asked to call our attention to freshmen who were in danger of failing as early as the first marking period, so that we could assign student tutors for them. The program immediately proved its effectiveness.

The second development had to do with residential patterns on campus. Soon after I had arrived at Princeton, it came to my attention that there was considerable discontent among incoming black students over dormitory arrangements for the first year. The reason was that all black freshmen who were not athletes were being assigned to single rooms whether they asked for them or not. In the routine information that had preceded their arrival on campus they, like all students, had been told that single rooms were scarce and that they could expect multiple occupancy. When, upon arrival, the black student was promptly given a single room for the first year, he naturally felt discriminated against.

When I looked into this, I was informed that there was no separate stated policy for blacks; assignments to rooms were made without knowledge of the students' race; if a black wound up in a single room it was by luck, not design. But deeper inquiry disclosed that although this was the policy, in actual practice blacks were being assigned to the more desirable single rooms in the belief that they were being done a favor — that is, that this might contribute to their academic achievement. After much discussion, the practice was changed so that all entering blacks were assigned to multiple rooms unless they requested singles.

In 1968, Fields became assistant dean of the college



Melvin R. McCrey '74

Four years later, however, the atmosphere had changed. The slogans of the day were replete with the new black consciousness: black is beautiful, proud to be black, black doesn't back down to anyone. By now we had a much larger community of blacks, too, and they wanted to be closer together. Under the existing policy, some blacks were finding themselves isolated during their freshman year in dormitories otherwise occupied entirely by whites. Again I suggested that the residential pattern be changed, this time so that no black freshman would be assigned to a room too far distant from his brothers. The administration also agreed to allow some rooms to be occupied solely by blacks.

By and large, the black students had rejected the club system. In the first place, they did not have to depend on it for social contacts. They had the black community. In the second place, the clubs did not represent to them their kind of "fun." Black jokes were not white jokes; black soul music was not white rock; black entertainment was not white entertainment. Those who did accept bids to join the clubs did so by design — get in and then bring your friends. I can remember the consternation of some of the more popular clubs at being rejected by black students. "We opened up and asked them to join us and they refused. How come?" It was an age-old story: join us when we need you, not when you want to. Every club felt it had to have at least one black student as a member to show that it was with the spirit of the times.

The third development was that we began to have our first overt incidents of interracial strife at Princeton. Most of them were trivial — intoxicated whites making insulting remarks — and the black students paid no attention to them. But some involved blacks being chased into their dorm rooms in the late hours of the night. I called in the black student leaders and reminded them that they had to exercise due restraint, but that under no circumstances were they to let themselves be physically assaulted. It was not long before some of the white students, emboldened by what they thought was timidity on the part of the blacks, overstepped the bounds.

The worst incidents occurred in the vicinity of Walker Hall, the location of what was called the "Rock Suite," a group of rooms then occupied by members of Cannon Club, most of them athletes. One football weekend, push came to shove, and several blacks forced their way into the suite to demand an apology. Some property was allegedly destroyed; a black was accused of flashing a knife; and a white was likewise charged with brandishing a length of chain. No one was seriously injured, but the episode prompted a long series of discussions on campus and an exhaustive investigation by

the discipline committee, which heard testimony of many earlier clashes as well.

Some contended that the black students had gone too far and severe measures would have to be taken against the offenders. Joe Moore, I, and others countered that there had been undue provocation by the white students building up to just such an incident. The fact that blacks had not taken matters into their own hands before was evidence that they were not out to seek trouble. In the end, the discipline committee decided against punishing individual participants in the confrontations and admonished "the entire university to take cognizance of the collective responsibility it bears for the creating of a community in which disorderly and offensive behavior will neither be condoned nor tolerated." It also warned both sides that similar actions in the future would bring severe disciplinary proceedings. As a result of the frank exchanges between blacks and whites that were part of these discussions, the atmosphere improved markedly.

IN THE FALL OF 1969, an Afro-American Studies Program was introduced into the curriculum. Before setting up this new interdepartmental plan, we reviewed several models that had been tried at other universities and resolved not to repeat their mistakes. The purpose of the program was to provide an opportunity for coordinated study of the history, culture, and current situation of the nation's 25 million citizens of African origins. The committee that designed the plan emphasized the importance that Afro-American studies not be intellectually isolated, and built much of the program out of existing courses in several departments. Even the new "core" courses were not to be relegated to "blacks only," though obviously many of them would appeal most strongly to blacks. As the committee's report pointed out, "Whites have much to learn from a study of the culture and experience of black Americans."

Above all, we were determined that the new program not be viewed as an easy way for black students to rack up credits. They would have to work as hard in these courses as they did in any other. I remember the interest and amazement that some faculty members expressed at the end of a term when a couple of blacks were put in academic jeopardy because they had failed one of the courses in the Afro-American program. To their great credit, the black professors who conducted these courses were fair but unyielding in their demands that the students measured up to high standards of performance.

The headquarters of the Afro-American Studies Program was a building that had formerly housed some special educational offices. Though it was adequate for the academic program, the students soon felt a need for more space for related extracurricular meetings and activities. They also expressed a desire to have "a place of their own" on the campus. In presenting their request to the administration, I stressed the symbolic importance such a facility would have. When the question was raised as to whether other minority students would also want a place of their own, I replied that black students were already joining with other minority groups on campus and the need was for a center that would be available to all members of the "third world." The trustees approved the concept and appropriated funds to refurbish the old Osborne Field House for this purpose. In October 1971 the Third World Center was opened as a focal point for the activities of the university's minority groups.

I did not know it then, but that was to be one of the last administrative decisions that I would have a part in making for black and other minority students at Princeton. Even before the Third World Center opened, I was on my way to Africa to become planning officer of the University of Zambia. Nonetheless, I left with full confidence that blacks and other minority members had established themselves as a significant presence at Princeton. □

Black students in front of Princeton's Third World Center



Melvin R. McCray '74