

Conference speakers urge world-wide unity of blacks

By Doreen Charles

Norman, Okla.—World wide unity of all black people was the theme of this year's second annual Big Eight Conference held here last week. The conference presented speakers of national and international fame such as Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy and activist Stokely Carmichael.

Representatives of black student governments from the Big Eight schools and 24 members of the Afro-American Collegian Society, along with seven members from the University Program Council from UNL participated in the two day event on Feb. 23 and 24.

Black people need to study their history and develop a more thorough understanding of their African identity, according to John Henry Clark, professor at Hunter College in New York.

Blacks have been brainwashed too long by being taught the European view of history, Clark said.

"African people are the originators of civilization," Clark said. "Europeans copied their ideas from Africa."

Pride in past

Mathematical and scientific concepts originated in Africa, he explained, and Europeans were ignorant of many ideas until they came to Africa.

The way African history is taught in schools today, black people are led to believe their ancestors were wild men swinging from trees, Clark said. Instead of being proud of their African ancestry, black people are taught to be ashamed.

"We need to communicate more with our African brothers and sisters.

"Information about Africa is purposely distorted," he said. Persons in the highest level of government are responsible for perpetrating the mistrust between Africans and Americans, he said.

"Africans visiting the United States are told to stay away from the black community," he said.

Divisiveness among lower and middle classes is a major hindrance to black unity, according to a workshop discussion Saturday.

Leadership

Middle class blacks who are unaware or unconcerned about the struggle of the majority of black people remain individualistic and refuse to become involved in the struggle. Due to middle class apathy, conditions for blacks are slowly worsening, as in post-reconstruction days.

"You need to study history," said Casey Childs, associate director of the Greater Urban League of Oklahoma

City. "You cannot move forward until you first look back.

More political involvement of young people is needed, Childs said. Blacks must study the struggle of the 60s and find new methods of combating racism.

"You are the agent of change," he said. "You must look to yourselves for leadership."

It is up to black college students to continue the struggle, said Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy at a dinner address.

Abernathy, known for his participation in the freedom marches of the 60s with Martin Luther King, stressed the importance of student political involvement.

Power vote

"There is no progress without struggle," he said.

Blacks must realize the power behind using their vote, Abernathy said.

"President Carter wouldn't be in the White House if it wasn't for our vote," he said.

Organization is the key to ending oppression, said Stokely Carmichael, keynote speaker at the conference. Carmichael, internationally known as a revolutionary in the 60s who coined the phrase "Black Power" had been in exile in West Africa and returned to the United States to form the All African People's Revolutionary Party.

"Without organization there cannot be a functioning society," he said.

Carmichael stressed the need for international unity, made possible by an awareness of one's identity.

"The way you perceive material reality is a result of the society in which you live," he said. "For example, if you look in this room, some of us will say we're black, some will say we're Negroes, some will say we're African. It depends really on how you've been taught to think that will tell you which one you are. Of course, proper thinking will tell you we're Africans, there's no question about it."

Join together

Society has so confused the thinking of African people in America that they don't know who they are, Carmichael said. Perceiving themselves as minorities, they cannot see the power behind a unified struggle with those in Africa, he said.

"Confusion is the biggest enemy of revolution," he said.

Africans everywhere have a responsibility to participate in the struggle, Carmichael said.

"If you are not in a political organization for the people, you are against the people," he stated. "If you do not help to organize the people, you are working for the enemy."

African people must join together and realize they are in the same struggle, he said.

"History is only made by the solid unified masses of the people," he said.

Free Africa

African people are the only people in the world who deny their heritage, Carmichael said. Their confusion about their identity prevents them from forming strong, meaningful organizations.

"If you look in America, you will find in all the other ethnic groups conscious political organizations," he said. "Every group except us."

Africans in America have not only denied their past, but refuse to associate with their past, he said. African people in America must organize to free Africa.

"Until Africa is free, no African in the world is free," he said. "The longer we are without organization, the more brutal will be our oppression."

The power behind an organized mass of all African people has no limits, Carmichael said.

"We must organize every African everywhere in the world and put them in an organization fighting to free the masses of the people," he said. "Once we've organized, no force on earth can mess with us."

Acting financial aids director quits

Acting director of the Scholarship and Financial Aids office, Ron Fritz, resigned Monday to manage a hardware store, he said.

However, Ron Fritz admitted that he has other reasons for leaving.

"There is more," he said, "but it will be significantly better for the department, the university and the students if I were to stop there."

Fritz was named acting director in July 1978 after Director Jack Ritchie resigned. He had been associate director since July 1973.

According to Fritz, his staff is aware he has resigned, but none contacted knew of any other reasons he might

have for leaving.

He said he has thought about leaving the department for about 10 months.

"It's an opportunity that doesn't come along often," he said, adding that it's never a good time to leave the department.

"We're in our busy season—the office is swamped. I just have to look out for myself in this particular time," he said.

Assistant to the Dean of Academic Services Robert Reid said he knew of Fritz's resignation but since Dean Gerald Bowker has been out of the office for several weeks, nothing has been decided about replacing Fritz. Fritz's resignation becomes effective March 31.

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