

# The Ethnic Cleansing of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Age of Obama: How HBCUs are Turning White

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*Dr. Issa wrote Part One of this article for the September 6, 2011, issue of Black Agenda Report, when he was an assistant professor of history and Africana Studies at Delaware State University, in Dover, an historically Black institution that becomes less Black each year. Dr. Issa planned to quickly follow through with Part Two, but was interrupted by the U.S. criminal justice system. He was fired from his job after campus police charged him with resisting arrest near a student demonstration, a legal nightmare that did not end until a mistrial was declared, this September. In the interim, Dr. Issa and his family were left without income. More than three years later, he has returned to the subject that so upset his former employers at Delaware State University: the ethnic cleansing of HBCUs.*

## **W.E.B. Du Bois, “Whither Why and Now,” 1960:**

“The American Negro has now reached a point in his progress where he needs to take serious account of where he is and whither he is going. Yet this situation is in sight and it brings not as many assume an end to the so-called Negro problems, but a beginning of even more difficult problems of race and culture. Because what we must now ask ourselves is when we become equal American citizens what will be our aims and ideals and what will we have to do with selecting these aims and ideals. Are we to assume that we will simply adopt the ideals of Americans and become what they are or want to be and that we will have in this process no ideals of our own?

That would mean that we would cease to be Negroes as such and become white in action if not completely in color. We would take on the culture of white Americans, doing as they do and thinking as they think. Manifestly this would not be satisfactory. Physically it would mean that we would be integrated with Americans losing first of all, the physical evidence of color and hair and racial type. We would lose our memory of Negro history and of those racial peculiarities which have long been associated with the Negro. We would cease to acknowledge any greater tie with Africa than with England or Germany. We would not try to develop Negro music and Art and Literature as distinctive and different, but allow them to be further degraded as is the case today.

As I have said before and I repeat, I am not fighting to settle the question of racial equality in America by the process of getting rid of the Negro race; getting rid of black folk, not producing black children, forgetting the slave trade and slavery, and the struggle for emancipation; of forgetting abolition and especially of ignoring the whole cultural history of Africans in the world.

“Theoretically Negro universities will disappear. Negro history will be taught less or not at all...”

Take for instance the current problem of the education of our children. By the law of the land today they should be admitted to the public schools. If and when they are admitted to these schools certain things will inevitably follow. Negro teachers will become rarer and in many cases will disappear. Negro children will be instructed in the public schools and taught under unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances. Even more largely than today they will fall out of school, cease to enter high school, and fewer and fewer will go to college. Theoretically Negro universities will disappear. Negro history will be taught less or not at all, and as in so many cases in the past Negroes will remember their white or Indian ancestors and quite forget their Negro forebearers.

Some are ashamed of themselves and their folk. They regard the study of Negro biography and the writing of Negro literature as a vain attempt to pretend that Negroes are really the equal of whites. That tends to be the point of view of those of our children who are educated in white schools. There are going to be schools which do not discriminate against colored people and the number is going to increase slowly in the present, but rapidly in the future until long before the year 2000, there will be no school segregation on the basis of race. The deficiency in knowledge of Negro history and culture, however, will remain and this danger must be met or else American Negroes will disappear. Their history and culture will be lost. Their connection with the rising African world will be impossible.”

In 1960, W.E.B. DuBois keynote address at Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina was prophetic. It was his last speech in the United States before he departed permanently to Ghana, West Africa. He warned African Americans of what was to come as it regards the Civil Rights Movement goals and the dangers he foresaw due to his 70 years of activism fighting for full citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. 54 years later DuBois foresight has come true. African American education as we know it is at a crossroad! If it continues at its present course, the most democratic ethnic group in America’s 300-year quest for freedom would be aborted! African American education will be destroyed! African Americans as we know them will cease to exist. History can repeat itself and African Americans can be re-enslaved! This is what we are fighting against! This is why we have published this series of essays.

### **The Nation Responds to Our Research: The College Board, NPR, MSNBC, Time Magazine and the HBCU Digest**

Since the publication of our first essay on HBCUs, several organizations that have a deep commitment to improving and providing educational services to citizens responded to our article. One notable organization that reacted to our research was the College Board. During the Winter of 2011, Jason Lee, Ph.D., the former policy administrator for the College Board conducted a closed forum online presentation on the Future of HBCUs. The title “American Higher Education Without Public HBCUs” showed the effects that systematic closures, forced mergers and Federal mandated integration of these institutions will have on African American student access to college and degree attainment outcomes in Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, and Tennessee over the next 20 years. Only a small controlled group of people were allowed to ask questions after his presentation. Many questions were directed to the possible end of HBCUs. All questions were deflected with the statement “HBCUs will always exist.”

Major media outlets have given credibility to the research provided in Part One of “How Black Colleges are Turning White: The Ethnic Cleansing of HBCUs in the Age of Obama.” In October of 2013, National Public Radio (NPR) titled “The Whitest HBCU in America” showed how racist state policy, coupled with systematic terrorism such as bombing the all black campus, forced African American out of the one of West Virginia’s HBCUs. Bluefield State University currently stands as the nation’s Whitest HBCU in America that still receives millions of dollars of federal funding geared for African Americans. MSNBC and Time Magazine also contributed a significant amount of coverage on the dismantling of HBCUs. Time Magazine’s article quoted the current White House Advisor on HBCUs, Mr. George Cooper, as stating that despite the fact that HBCUs are turning white, “These schools still are, and always will be, legally considered historically black... The definition is a federal definition...They’re living up to it.” But is he twisting the truth? The Higher Education Act of 1965 clearly states that HBCUs are “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans.” Why are State and Federal officials not dealing with federally mandated policy as it regards HBCUs? Why is the current White House Advisor on HBCUs misleading the American public?

The most lucid response to the disassembling of HBCUs has come from J.L. Carter of the HBCU Digest. On October 7, 2014, Mr. Carter in his article “On HBCUs, White House Moves from Disregard to Dismantling.” The popularity of his article has yielded dozens of comments and almost as many online repost. For the first time a well-grounded and well received journalist has called President Barack H. Obama’s White House policy as it regards his most loyal constituents the “final death blows to our timeless institutions.” In other words, Carter makes it clear that the end is near as it regards America’s HBCUs. But still, although Mr. Carter’s article is critical regarding public policy and the future of African Americans, he never delineates the reasons why HBCUs are being dismantled by Federal and State governments.

### **Ayers and United States vs. Fordice**

It will be ironic, to say the least, if the institutions that sustained Blacks during Segregation were themselves destroyed to combat its vestiges.-Justice Charles Thomas

In 1975 an African American family sued the state of Mississippi for maintaining an unconstitutional dual system of higher education. The plaintiff’s son was a student at one of the HBCUs in Mississippi and felt that the schools economic status was not equal to that of the white public universities in the state. According to the Ayers family, Black students and faculty learned and taught in inferior conditions. The Ayers family simply wanted the tax dollars that African Americans paid to go to the schools of their choice as mandated by Brown vs. Board of Education (1954). In 1992, the United States Supreme Court ruled that that Mississippi’s HBCUs had been discriminated against. Justice J. White Opinion of the Court 1992 decision also warned that “If we understand private petitioners to press us to order the upgrading of Jackson State, Alcorn State, and Mississippi Valley solely so that they may be publicly financed, exclusively black enclaves by private choice, we reject that request.”

In 2002, Mississippi HBCUs were awarded \$500 million to upgrade their schools. The schools were forced to integrate classes by bringing a certain amount of white students and faculty in order to receive federal monies. Furthermore, the district courts left it totally up to state

legislators to determine how HBCUs enrollment would be dealt with. Various states interpreting the Supreme Courts vague language regarding its ruling sought to immediately increase White enrollment and faculty recruitment at HBCUs. In 1992, Tennessee State University was told by its state legislator that if it didn't increase its student and faculty white numbers by 50% in 1993, it would be forced to shut down. "TSU is offering 500 full scholarships, worth \$768,000, to white students, based not on their financial need but on the color of their skin. It is searching for more white teachers." This increase in White student and faculty enrollment and recruitment caused a decrease in many HBCU's enrollment of African Americans. Because of this, the Ayers family again made an appeal to the District court stating that they did not want Black student and faculty declines, but were simply asking that HBCUs be treated equally to that of White public schools as it regarded funding. Their appeal was denied. In Mississippi, Black Male enrollment decreased because of the 1992 Fordice decision. In all the Fordice case continues to have a tremendous impact on African Americans and HBCUs as a whole.

### **Obama HBCU Cuts Began in 2009: Lest We Forget!**

In 2007, President George Bush announced that his White House had proposed an \$85 million cut to HBCUs for the years 2008-09. Just months into his first term as president, Obama's White house announced that they would continue the Bush cuts to HBCUs by decreasing the budgets by up to \$85 million. Many media outlets had called the president cuts the beginning of the Great Depression for African Americans. They were also concerned that since African Americans gave Obama unyielding support during the 2008 election, how could he then cut HBCUs while at the same time granting Hispanic-serving schools up to \$200 million in increased funding.

During the second term of Obama's presidency, he again imposed major cuts to HBCUs. The Plus Loans cuts to HBCUs caused a tremendous amount of damage because many African American students were not able to attend school and this caused a major drop in enrollment for many HBCUs. Howard University lost \$7.5 million dollars, while Hampton University lost \$6.4 million. In all HBCUs more than \$160 million and more than 28,000 students were denied loans and unable to attend school during the 2012 academic year. Many African American leaders saw this as a direct attack on the already dwindling African American middleclass and called for an immediate meeting with President Obama and threatened to sue.

### **End of Affirmative Action In Higher Education Good or Bad for HBCUs: The Case Of California**

With the end of Affirmative Action in Higher Education, African Americans who attend predominately white colleges and universities will become fewer and fewer. African American faculty at these schools will also decrease. African Americans in higher education in California have already been affected by Affirmative Action. In 1996 and 2003 Proposition 54 and 209, state policies that ended race-based admission, had an immediate impact on African American enrollment at the state's public colleges and universities. Of the 4,422 students in UCLA's freshman class of 2006, only 100 (2.26%) were African American. This is significantly down from 4% in 1996. Furthermore, according to a study that was put out in 2013 by The Campaign for College Opportunity, African American admissions rates to the University of California system have declined by 17 % over the past 16 years. African Americans had the lowest admission rates compared to Whites, Asians and Hispanics in the state. According to the study, this was not always the case. Before Affirmative Action was

struck down in the state, the African American admission rate was almost 75%. As of 2012, it now stands at a dismal 58%. The report continues by stating that African Americans are least likely to be admitted to UC's most "selective campuses—UCLA, UC Berkeley and UC San Diego." At UCLA, located in Los Angeles were the state's largest Black population resides, African American admission is less than 14%. And at the California State University schools, African Americans have the lowest graduation rates of any group. The report maintains that "the four year graduation gap between Blacks and Whites is getting bigger, from 11 percentage points in 2003 to more than 15 points in 2012."

### **Where Did All Of The Africans American Students Go At "California's HBCU?"**

California State University at Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), an African-American and Hispanic-serving school of higher learning, has been affectionately called "little Africa" and "California's HBCU." Created during the unrest called the Watts Rebellion, Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown determined that the Dominguez Hills site would have the best openness to the Black and Hispanic community who wanted college training for upward mobility.

From its earliest inception, CSUDH has always had a large African American population. It served as the former headquarters for The National Council for Black Studies during the 1970s. According to data, the schools African American student population was around 45% until the state ended affirmative action in the 1990's. From 2006-2008, the school Black population hovered around 30%. But during the presidency of Dr. Mildred García (2007-12) the school's African American population dropped to a dismal 17% by 2013. According to anonymous sources, Dr. Mildred García tenure represented an unspoken policy to increase the Hispanic student's population at the expense of African Americans. Without serious community dialogue, and a commitment from federal and state agencies, African American higher education in the state of California will be a footnote in history in 20 years.

Several other states have witnessed a decline in African American enrollment at predominately white schools. These decreases will continue as the effects of the 2014 Supreme Court decision to end Affirmative Action at White schools continue. If HBCUs are turning White and or being obstructed or shut down because of lack of federal funding, where will African Americans be educated in the next 20 years?

### **The Attack on Africana Studies**

The attack on Africana studies, Black studies, Pan African studies and African American studies reached its apex when Naomi Schaefer Riley, a blogger for the Chronicle of Higher Education, wrote her infamous essay entitled "The Most Persuasive Case for Eliminating Black Studies?" Here, Riley gives a passionate appeal to the readers of the Chronicle for her belief that Black studies should be eliminated from America's colleges and universities. Riley's essay is part of a systemic effort to dilute or eliminate African Americans studies from mainstream academic life. But the attack on Africana studies did not start with her. This ongoing cultural war against Black identity in the United States is linked to the Ethnic Cleansing of HBCUs and African Americans at predominately White universities. Below is a reading list of books that seek to reshape and end Africana studies and all studies that are not deeply entrenched in Eurocentric Hegemony discourse:

**Samuel Huntington, Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity (2005).**

“America was founded by British settlers who brought with them a distinct culture, says Huntington, including the English language, Protestant values, individualism, religious commitment, and respect for law. The waves of immigrants that later came to the United States gradually accepted these values and assimilated into America’s Anglo-Protestant culture. More recently, however, our national identity has been eroded by the problems of assimilating massive numbers of primarily Hispanic immigrants and challenged by issues such as bilingualism, multiculturalism, the devaluation of citizenship, and the “denationalization” of American elites.”

**Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (1998).**

“The classic image of the American nation — a melting pot in which differences of race, wealth, religion, and nationality are submerged in democracy — is being replaced by an orthodoxy that celebrates difference and abandons assimilation. While this upsurge in ethnic awareness has had many healthy consequences in a nation shamed by a history of prejudice, the cult of ethnicity, if pressed too far, threatens to fragment American society to a dangerous degree. Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner in history and adviser to the Kennedy and other administrations, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., is uniquely positioned to wave the caution flag in the race to a politics of identity. Using a broader canvas in this updated and expanded edition, he examines the international dimension and the lessons of one polyglot country after another tearing itself apart or on the brink of doing so: among them the former Yugoslavia, Nigeria, even Canada. Closer to home, he finds troubling new evidence that multiculturalism gone awry here in the United States threatens to do the same. “One of the most devastating and articulate attacks on multiculturalism yet to appear.”—Wall Street Journal ‘A brilliant book . . . we owe Arthur Schlesinger a great debt of gratitude.’—C. Vann Woodward, *New Republic*”

John J. Miller, *The Unmaking of Americans: How Multiculturalism has Undermined the Assimilation Ethic* (1998). “Will today’s immigrant population become the first in American history that fails to assimilate? If so, the United States threatens to collapse into disunion. Much of the blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the feet of multiculturalists, who have undermined the concept of Americanization by attacking it as racist and advancing in its place a divisive agenda of group rights and bilingual education. Unfortunately, many on the right have responded to this crisis by viewing immigrants themselves as their mortal enemies— instead of the entrenched native-born liberal elite that has declared war on the American idea itself.

“In *The Unmaking of Americans*, John J. Miller breaks this standoff with a commonsense call for a new Americanization movement based on fundamental American principles. He draws on lessons from the Americanization movement of the early 20th century, which helped the Ellis Island generation of immigrants adapt to their new home. In doing so, Miller makes the first modern defense of a patriotic social crusade that many “tenured radicals” have come to scorn as nothing more than a gentrified form of ethnic cleansing.

“Miller sets out to convince conservatives concerned about immigration that the real threat to American unity is not the huddled masses of hardworking newcomers, but longstanding left-wing policies that actively inhibit assimilation. Proponents of bilingual education refuse to teach children in

English, racial preferences encourage harmful group loyalties, welfare rules threaten the work ethic, and the citizenship process is under constant pressure from people who want to dumb it down. "The Unmaking of Americans" reveals where and how the system of assimilation fell apart- and lays out a specific plan of action for correcting the problem that conservatives, libertarians, and sensible liberals can support."

### **Clarence Walker, *We Can't Go Home Again: An Argument About Afrocentrism* (2001).**

*"Afrocentrism has been a controversial but popular movement in schools and universities across America, as well as in black communities. But in *We Can't Go Home Again*, historian Clarence E. Walker puts Afrocentrism to the acid test, in a thoughtful, passionate, and often blisteringly funny analysis that melts away the pretensions of this "therapeutic mythology."*

As expounded by [Molefi Kete Asante](#), Yosef Ben-Jochannan, and others, Afrocentrism encourages black Americans to discard their recent history, with its inescapable white presence, and to embrace instead an empowering vision of their African (specifically Egyptian) ancestors as the source of western civilization. Walker marshals a phalanx of serious scholarship to rout these ideas. He shows, for instance, that ancient Egyptian society was not black but a melange of ethnic groups, and questions whether, in any case, the pharaonic regime offers a model for blacks today, asking "if everybody was a King, who built the pyramids?" But for Walker, Afrocentrism is more than simply bad history-it substitutes a feel-good myth of the past for an attempt to grapple with the problems that still confront blacks in a racist society. The modern American black identity is the product of centuries of real history, as Africans and their descendants created new, hybrid cultures-mixing many African ethnic influences with native and European elements. Afrocentrism replaces this complex history with a dubious claim to distant glory.

Afrocentrism offers not an empowering understanding of black Americans' past," Walker concludes, "but a pastiche of 'alien traditions' held together by simplistic fantasies." More to the point, this specious history denies to black Americans the dignity, and power, that springs from an honest understanding of their real history."

*The next article will deal with Delaware, Tennessee and Maryland. It will also give solutions on how to stop the dismantling of HBCU.*

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*Several Months after writing the first article, Dr. Issa was arrested and charged with four misdemeanor counts because he supported his students Constitutional Rights to petition government as it regarded the status of African Americans on the campus. Dr. Issa was also fired. After almost three years of prosecution, Dr. Issa went to trial in September of 2014 on one charge. The other charges were dropped. The trial lasted 8 days and ended in a mistrial. The Attorney General's office headed by Mr. Beau Biden Jr. has announced that they will try him again. Dr. Issa needs your help in raising money for his legal defense fund. Please click link below and donate:*

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/dr-jahi-issa-legal-defence-fund/x/8914824>

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