

A HISTORY OF
THE
BLACK WOMEN'S CAUCUS
OF
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Anna Taylor
M.Div Thesis
Spring 1983

Readers:
Mary Pellauer
Beverly Harrison

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction, Statement of Purpose, Presentation of the Situation
- II. "Political" Set-Up of Union Seminary: Paradigm of the Dinosaurs
- III. 1978: The Formation of the Black Women's Caucus
- IV. In Retrospect
- V. 1973 - 1983: Personal Histories and Events
- VI. Implications for Black Women in Ministry
- VII. Concluding Remarks
- VIII. Appendices

I. Introduction

This thesis deals with the formation of the Black Women's Caucus of Union Theological Seminary. Its major premise is this: the Black Women's Caucus formed in response to the seminary's insensitivity to the needs of Black women at Union; an insensitivity that resulted from the political structure of the seminary. It did not form solely as a reaction to the male chauvanism of black males or the sexism of the Black Caucus. For this reason I have outlined my thesis as follows:

- I. Introduction, Statement of Purpose, Presentation of the Situation
- II. "Political" Set-Up of Union Seminary: Paradigm of the Dinosaurs
- III. 1978: The Formation of the Black Women's Caucus
- IV. In Retrospect
- V. 1973 - 1983: Personal Histories and Events
- VI. Implications for Black Women in Ministry
- VII. Concluding Remarks
- VIII. Appendices

This is, therefore, not a "conventional" history whose outline might look something like this:

- I. Introduction/Statement of Purpose
- II. Black Women
 - A. Social Situation
 1. Historical
 2. Economic
 3. Class
 4. Church

- B. Relationships
 - 1. Structures/organizations
 - 2. Between Black Women
 - 3. White Women and Black Women
 - 4. Black Men and Black Women
- III. Formation of the Black Women's Caucus
 - A. Sexual Harrassment
 - B. Suicide Attempts
 - C. Treatment of Black Women at Black Caucus Meetings
 - 1. Before formation of the Black Women's Caucus
 - 2. After formation of the Black Women's Caucus
- IV. Black Women in Seminary
- V. Survival
 - A. Senate re-evaluation of caucuses
 - B. Activities
 - 1. Past
 - 2. Present
 - 3. Future
- VI. Implications for Black Women in Ministry
- VII. Appendices

which was my original outline. I grew dissatisfied with this outline because all it did was give me a way to order the material I wanted to work with. It did not give me the order I needed to tell my story. My final outline satisfies me for two reasons: (1) it is more in line with the inverted pyramid style of writing in which I was trained; (2) it gives me a concrete way to deal with the myth of objectivity.

In regard to reason (1) I was trained as a reporter. The stories I wrote placed the article's most important information or bottom line truth in the lead (first paragraph). Supporting infor-

mation was then supplied to flesh out or support the contentions presented in the lead. One could ask why didn't I take a feature article approach to writing this thesis. Surely that style was also part of my training. Yes it was. That was how I arrived at my original outline. This brings me to reason (2).

In my mind there is no such thing as objective history just as I learned there is no such thing as objective reporting. Presenting my thesis while using my original outline would have presupposed an objective reading of the material I was working with and a disinterested presentation of that material. Under the myth of objectivity, there is an assumption that you are allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions when in reality what you're doing is setting them up to agree with your conclusion; a process not unlike that of an attorney presenting a case in court. To have stated beforehand what my biases and purposes are and then to have proceeded along the lines of my first outline would have been no less a "leading" of the readers to my conclusion.

By presenting my agenda first and defining who my audience is, I was forced to deal with my preconceived ideas; as a result of this process some of these ideas were confirmed (e.g. the Black church community has yet to deal seriously with the issue of sexism in the Black community). Others, although confirmed, were shown to be limited; e.g. when I decided on this topic for my thesis I was convinced that the formation of the Black Women's Caucus was caused by the sexism in the Black community in general and in Union in particular. Others were dead wrong; e.g. Professor James Cone is the enemy, the problem; note the emphasis is on the articles, not the nouns.

The formation of the Black Women's Caucus must be viewed in the larger context of the Seminary first. If it isn't one becomes susceptible to the myth/untruth (whatever you wish to call it) that the Black Women's Caucus formed because of "friction" or "personality conflicts" between black men and black women at the Seminary. This is why the political set-up of Union is dealt with before the actual formation of the Caucus itself or the events leading up to its formation. In the course of my investigation I found that the same "friction" and "personality conflicts" could be used to describe relations between different black men in the community; thus the male-female element was absent. By focusing in on personalities another element contributing to or exacerbating these frictions is overlooked. One comes to this myth by looking at the formation of the Caucus solely as an internal problem; a frame of reference which, while valid, is insular and therefore severely limited. One must look at the relationship of the "black community" at Union to the "white community; define these communities, look at the other "communities" at Union, see how they relate or are impacted upon by the "white community". One must draw parallels or see dissimilarities from these observations, form conclusions from a deeper analysis of these seeming parallels and dissimilarities. By not doing this one comes away with a view that 1) only tells part of the truth and 2) a view which assumes that one has the whole truth. This was the situation I found myself in at the beginning of this project. And while I in no way claim to have the whole truth, I at least no longer suffer under the delusion that any one person, myself included, has the whole truth. What we all have are particular points of view which taken collectively present a truth.

Statement of Purpose

My intention is twofold: First, Black women are a part of this institution's history and we must begin to claim that history as part of our heritage. In writing this thesis I attempt to reclaim a small part of that heritage and leave behind a record for those who will follow. There is power in knowing one's history and in particular how one is a part of that history. Why is it that we never see where we are in the making of history? I think it is because we are taught to think of history as something past, over with. We are encouraged, if not indoctrinated, to take an observer's stance. We aren't encouraged to ask "where was I?" or "what else was going on?" when all this was taking place. We just watch and thus are not aware that the present is a continuation of that past which we are told is history. I wish to leave behind a record that will be argued over and revised and added to by the Black women who will come to Union in the years ahead. This is a record for all those Black women and those here today in whatever capacity they find themselves (students, spouses of students and faculty, support staff, administrators, faculty) who will remain when I am gone.

Secondly, I intend to kill two myths/untruths in this Seminary: (1) the black community at Union is divided because of tensions between black men and women; therefore, if we can resolve this tension we will have a united community. (2) The concerns of the black community are represented by the Black Caucus. By dealing with why the Black Women's Caucus formed both myths (I hope) will bite the dust.

Last, but most certainly not least, I write this thesis for myself.

Presentation of the Situation

As I sat down to write this history I realized I hadn't given much thought to my own activities within the Black Women's Caucus. When I did start to give thought to those activities I see how short-sighted I was. I thought I appeared on the scene in 1981, the year I became convenor of the Caucus; but that's not true. My involvement with this Caucus started in March 1979 and picked up again almost two years later when I enrolled as a full time Master of Divinity student.

In March 1979 I was a prospective student participating in Union's Conference on Theological Education. At that conference I vaguely remember Linda Thomas, a black M.Div. junior, mentioning to me that the black women at Union had just formed their own caucus and were bringing Michelle Wallace to Union as a speaker. The topic came up because Ms. Wallace had been an adjunct professor at N.Y.U.'s School of Journalism where I had done my undergraduate work. Linda wondered if I knew anything about her. The fact that the black women had formed their own caucus did not strike me as unusual. Black women have always had their own organizations (e.g. sororities like Alpha Kappa Alpha, civic organizations like the National Council of Negro Women, business groups like 100 Black Women, etc.). But this caucus's formation was unusual in that it helped make October 25, 1978 a red letter date for Union. On that date the Student Senate had drafted a letter to the Board of Trustees urging them to divest the Seminary of all its holdings in

South Africa. In that same meeting the Senate voted unanimously to endorse the formation of the Black Women's Caucus. Of the two I would have to say that for me the more momentous event was the caucus's formation; for while I have no idea if Union really has divested itself in all ways, shapes and forms from its holdings in South Africa, I do know that the shock waves of that caucus forming are still being felt in this seminary almost six years later.

I remember that March conference as if it were yesterday; how beautiful the weather was, how impressed I was with the students' honestly disagreeing with one another in the Social Hall, how Betty Bolden, a black support staff person working in the library, directed me to McGiffert Hall to receive a copy of the Union Dues in which Delores Williams, a black Ph.D. student had written of black women's pain at Union. I remember being at a Black Caucus get together given for blacks participating in this March conference and sitting with Delores in a corner of that apartment. I shared with her how I really could not relate to the "blacker-than-thou" talk going on in the room that the black men were engaged in. If anyone had told me that three future convenors of the Black Women's Caucus had crossed paths that day (Linda, Delores and myself), not only would I have asked "where and who" but I would also have laughed when I was identified. Two years passed before I returned to Union and by then I had resolved not to become involved with any caucus.

What changed that resolve was what I experienced here at Union my first semester, things that must not be relegated to some dusty recess of my brain and not dusted off until some future investiga-

tor deciding to tell the story of black women at Union calls me up and asks for an interview.

I expected the black students at Union to be supportive of one another. After all we were all going into a field in which we want to serve the larger Black community, right? Three events from that first semester stand out in my mind.

The first was a Black Caucus meeting in Union's upper refectory. It erupted into an argument because Linda Thomas, then convenor of the Black Women's Caucus asked why no women had been considered as speakers for a symposium on the Black Church that the Black Caucus decided to hold in February. One man snidely answered that if she had attended the Proposal Committee meetings she could have proposed some. The discussion went around the room, the topic now focused on black men and women in the seminary, the tension felt between the two caucuses and what to do about it. Having just returned from my denomination's General Assembly I said having a meeting where different points of view were aired might help. I was promptly told by a black man that how Presbyterians did things had nothing to do with the Black church. I remember asking him later why he snapped at me that way and he apologized saying that he was reacting to the tension in the room (which was incredibly thick). I remember another man trying to pin another down on the point of whether or not he felt women should be ordained. As I was leaving the Upper Refectory I remember hearing the first man say "Just tell me yes or no."

The second event was a lecture at Barnard where Bernice Johnson Regan spoke of black women needing to give themselves new images.

One of the old images she spoke of was of black women holding up walls and I asked her how long is one supposed to hold up walls. I was crying then, describing in general terms what I experienced at that Black Caucus meeting. Katie Canon, a Ph.D student at Union stood up after me and referred to other black women who had come to Union and had "gone under." We didn't know each other then but she knew I had just come that year. I remember Ms. Regan saying very clearly, "Y'all need to have a meeting." The president of the Black Caucus, a Ph.D. student, was present at the lecture and in the halls of Union later that week he offered his help to me, sharing what a trying place Union was and what it did to black people. I informed him I was speaking specifically of the Black Caucus; not Union where I was expecting that kind of treatment. He told me that what happened in the Black Caucus meeting I referred to in my question at Barnard was a result of personality conflicts. As the term progressed I remember having the distinct impression of being talked about and given the "cold shoulder" by particular black men.

The third event is really two separate occasions. The first was talking to Linda Thomas in the Peer and Resource Counseling Team office and meeting with her subsequently to share impressions of Union and what I was experiencing. The second was sitting one day with Kelly Brown, a second year M.Div. student, in the Pit where she shared with me things that happened to her during her first year and continued to happen her second year. Talking to different black male students and other people at Union, hearing them express the same or similar experiences helped me focus on something that enabled me to see that the problem was deeper than

personality conflicts. Basically what we were experiencing was a general lack of respect for us as human beings, a lack of respect that seemed to go beyond the normal dislike people might have for one another if they disagree on issues or just don't hit it off. We were on the outs and therefore did not count. But on the outs of what? Not until this, my third year, have I been able to diagnose why this situation even exists. This basic disrespect does not have to be dealt with because of what I am now about to place before you.

II. "Political" Set-Up of Union Seminary: Paradigm of the Dinosaurs

I have identified three zones in Union which describe the way Union Seminary operates: the Dinosaurs, the Buffer Zone, and the Bottom. The Dinosaurs are on top, the Buffer Zone is in the middle, and the lowest level is the Bottom. If drawn it would look like this:

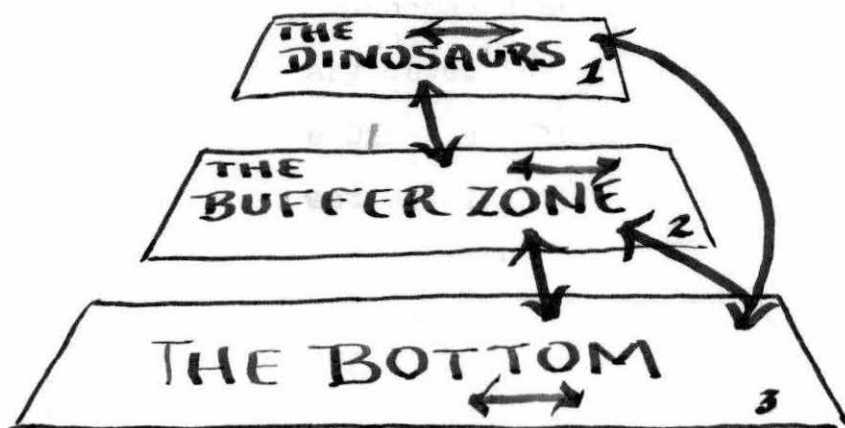


diagram 1: front view

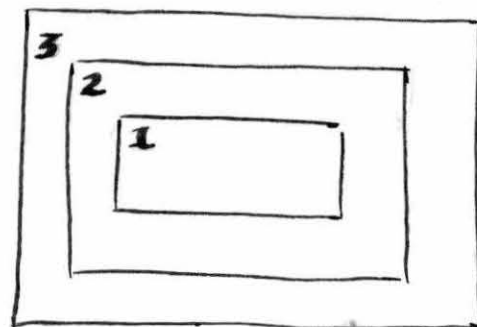


diagram 2: top view

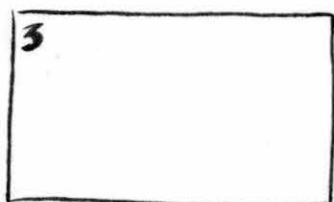


diagram 3: side view

Lines of communication running within and between zones in diagram 1 tend to hide the fact that zones are separated as the front view would seem to indicate. Diagram 2 should be understood as a box within a box within a box. Diagram 3 shows how this set up by viewing it solely from the perspective of the Bottom keeps one from seeing the hierarchical structure of diagram 1. The walls of the boxes should be considered porous, allowing for interaction as indicated by the arrows in diagram 1. However this interaction is in many ways superficial (e.g. Dinosaurs talk to the Bottom, eat in the refectory at the same tables, sit beside one another in chapel, etc.) but on a deeper level only allow for special, "privileged" types to interact.

White male tenured faculty are on top in Union's political picture. They ultimately call the shots; i.e. determine the character of the school. I call them the Dinosaurs. These are people who have been here usually (but not always) twenty years or more. This minimum length of time plus the field they're in determines what clout they have. For example, someone could be here twenty years but if they are in a field that doesn't command respect, they won't have the clout of someone here the same number of years in a field that does.

The next level down is what I call the Buffer Zone. Here you find all other faculty and administration people; e.g. tenured non-white faculty, white female faculty, white male faculty who aren't dinosaurs yet, the president of the seminary, the academic dean, dean of students, etc.

Everyone else at Union falls into the last level which I call

the Bottom: all students, support staff, Auburn Seminary, Student Senate, etc.)

The Board of Trustees does not really figure in this picture because in terms of the working relationships represented by this picture there is no institutionalized mechanism by which Board members are in direct contact with the Bottom. Yes, there are indirect ways that contact is made but in terms of the running of the Seminary or any changes to be considered, recommendations from members of the Buffer Zone and the Dinosaurs carry the most weight.

With only white males (or those emulating the white male norm) on top, the curriculum and social structures of the Seminary validate existing white male norms in our society. In order to survive in the seminary if you do not fit the standard category, modes of survival are eventually established: a union for staff, caucuses for the different constituencies among the students.

In the case of caucuses, their demands are many times reflected/answered by the presence of particular persons or entities in the Buffer Zone. White women clamor for female role models in the faculty, women are brought in. Black students clamor for black role models, more black faculty appear. A concern for interdenominational and international concerns is expressed, an ecumenical center is established. This quick sketch of present reality at Union is in no way to suggest that immediate satisfaction of these demands is the norm or that these demands are the sole cause for the appearance of these entities in the Buffer Zone. This would be a gross exaggeration of the Bottom's power. In Union's history image and response to issues being expressed in the larger culture have been

more influential in affecting the composition of the Buffer Zone. What I wish to show by this quick sketch is the relationship that may exist between a particular constituency in the Bottom and a particular presence in the Buffer Zone. For instance, there was at one time at Union a Dean of Women Students, ostensibly to handle the concerns of the women students. I have not been able to find out what happened to this position. Black faculty and administrators are used in like manner on a white campus like Union to deal with the concerns of black students. Thus you have white faculty and administrators looking to black faculty and administrators to tell them how they should handle/deal with the "black community's issues or particular black students at the institution.

In this particular instance Black faculty and administrators are perceived to be in touch with the black community in an institution. In some ways they are expected to be in touch with that community in ways that white faculty are not expected to be in touch with an analogous white community. Black faculty and administrators become the black community's spokesperson whether the black community is consenting to this or not. A situation can develop in which these Buffer Zone people use this stance to get what they want from the institution or keep what they have in terms of prestige, influence, etc. rather than addressing the specific concerns of the black community. If at any time there appears to be a communication problem between this Buffer Zone person and the community, the Buffer Zone person's credibility/power base is weakened. Their legitimacy rating goes down. Other factors come into play which keep this scenario from being as cut and dried as I have laid it out here, but in essence this is what happens.

For example, in Union's case if the Dinosaurs see that a particular constituency no longer stands behind the Buffer Zone person, they have no reason to listen to what that person says. This person is seen as speaking only for themselves. More importantly the Dinosaurs can no longer use this Buffer Zone person as a shield to distance them from the demands of that constituency. Please note that this may be an extra-seminary constituency whose demands are later carried on by an inter-seminary constituency. This is why I stated earlier that image or response to larger issues in the culture can carry more weight in deciding the make up of the Buffer Zone. So long as the Dinosaurs can reroute all concerns to a Buffer Zone person, they do not have to deal with the concern. They do not have to change or make accommodations. Any power/influence this Buffer Zone person has is grudgingly acknowledged and would be readily diminished if not ultimately taken away by the Dinosaurs if the opportunity were to arise.

It must be understood that anyone in the Buffer Zone is expendable. This, however, does not mean that the Buffer Zone is expendable because it does serve a purpose. The Buffer Zone acts as a shield for the Dinosaurs. In Union's case I have noticed that the people who get the most virilient complaints are those who fit in this category. For instance, Beverly Harrison, James Cone and Thomas Robinson are the professors whose names are most on the lips of students who have gripes. These professors have to varying degrees changed their syllabi in response to criticism and other reasons that professors might use when they decide to change their course offerings. Yet Handy, Shinn and Brown who also get a certain amount of criticism do not suffer the "attacks" (e.g.

open challenges in class) that the former three have. Yet the latter three are Dinosaurs.

It is to their advantage that the first three, the Buffer Zone people, are the recipients of the most "heat." So long as the Buffer Zone is responding, positively or negatively, to this "heat" any "heat" directed at the Dinosaurs is negligible, light-weight passing shots; not the concerted all out barrages directed at Cone or Robinson. This is why the positions of academic dean and the president of the seminary belong in the Buffer Zone. This is not to say that a particular president or academic dean cannot become or be a Dinosaur. It would depend on the person. But, in the final analysis, academic deans come and academic deans go. Presidents come and presidents go (they can even be gotten rid of). So long as they do their job - i.e. if a president's job is seen as that of fund raising and funds are raised through this person's efforts -- they're in as long as they wish. So long as an academic dean is pushing the curriculum of the school along the lines the Dinosaurs feel proper and correct, this dean can do as he or she sees fit. How this Buffer Zone person behaves in relation to the Bottom depends on how they view themselves in relation to the Dinosaurs (e.g. hope to be one someday, know they will never be one, etc.). I have identified two modes of behavior: 1) overseer; 2) refuge.

The overseer maintains control over a particular constituency within the institution and must be seen as maintaining control over this constituency in the eyes of the Dinosaurs. To maintain control the overseer usually relates to an "elite," a small segment of the constituency. So long as this elite is behind the

overseer (for whatever reason), the Dinosaurs can't not listen to what the overseer has to say or if choosing not to listen, they must move with caution against the overseer. This overseeing relationship is manifested in different ways. For example, a white male professor seeking tenure, hoping to be a dinosaur one day, would be seen cracking the whip on the Ph.D. students in his field who work for him as tutors. A black male with tenure who knows he will never be a dinosaur at Union but nevertheless can do something with the little power/influence given him, needs to have a cadre that is used to legitimate him. Please do not think the "using" as I have termed it is one way; he, too, is used. Thus on a small scale the same type of shielding relationship that exists between the Dinosaurs and the overseer is at work between the overseer and his/her cadre.

The other role, refuge, can be appropriated by faculty and administrators in the Buffer Zone. (Dinosaurs for the most part are overseers.) I have seen this role manifested thus: Ph.D. students who have not conformed to the dictates of the Dinosaurs in their chosen field, switch fields and are provided protection; i.e. they are not forced to transfer to another seminary or simply leave theological education altogether. They do not have to have their work unwillingly compromised. Note the emphasis is on unwillingly, not on compromised. Not all Ph.D. students find themselves in the position of having their work unwillingly compromised or just plain co-opted for that matter. Another way this role of refuge works is in relation to students in other degree programs or support staff who need encouragement, advice, someone who is willing to take an interest in their situation. An example of this could be: 1) the

spouse of a faculty member finds herself divorced from him with no way of supporting herself. A refuge could make a place for her in one of the offices doing secretarial work; thus, enabling her to regain self-esteem and showing her that she is not friendless. Another example might be of a student who wishes to go to Latin America through the seminary in a self-initiated project. The obvious faculty person from whom the student might seek help does not support this student's efforts. A "refuge" type's encouragement and aid together with the student's own determination can keep the student from giving up totally and perhaps result in the student's project getting off the ground.

The overseer and refuge roles are not limited to the working relationship between the Buffer Zone and the Bottom. It can also describe intrazone relationships. Thus students can be overseers/refuges to other students, support staff to support staff, faculty to faculty and any other combination in between. By the same token one cannot automatically impute altruism to the refuge type or ignore the possibility that one person can be a refuge in some instances and an overseer in others.

In regard to the formation of the Black Women's Caucus, black faculty and administrators (whether consciously or not) for the most part have played the overseer role where black women students at Union were concerned. Needs and concerns raised were continually not dealt with. By the next year the same need or concern would reappear.

A pattern of appeasement or neglect develops, not unlike the pattern the Seminary as a whole adopts in its relation to the Bot-

tom. Thus black faculty/administrators merely reflect their Union counterparts. An example of this pattern in the larger community was shown in the Seminary's dealings with the support staff and their efforts to get a union recognized by the administration in the 1981-82 school year. One would have thought that a Seminary with a president who is vocal in his feelings about the rights of workers would have been less hard nosed than Union was.

It is usually at this time individual stories from the black community would be used to illustrate this point, a method which tends to lead one into the "personality conflict" trap. By focusing in on individual stories and not taking them as a whole, one can dismiss the incidents as unusual, exceptions. By taking them as a whole, one is able to see that a pattern emerges; a pattern that once identified enables one to see why at different times relations between faculty/administration and the Black Caucus were strained. One can see why the personal problems of individual students could not be dealt with, why the formation of the Black Women's Caucus would be opposed. Because of this pattern, not solely on the basis of the participants in this pattern, the Fall of 1978 brought the formation of the Black Women's Caucus.

Basically what you have is a system not seeing that it needs to have its modus operandi changed, people working with a mindset that was not equipped to handle the needs of human beings because their mindset in essence put academics before people; a mindset that was invested in maintaining a particular posture before the "white community" (i.e. the Dinosaurs) and was therefore unwilling or unable to hear what problems were being articulated if those

problems were not couched in the terms anticipated or expected.

III. 1978: The Formation of the Black Women's Caucus

Two events occurred the spring semester of 1978 that helped set the stage for the Black Women's Caucus forming the following fall. One was a party at Professor James Forbes' apartment. One person remembers a black woman named Gwen Johnson on that occasion speaking about the pain of black women at Union. Another woman, Naomi Franklin, echoed the sentiment. My interviewee remembers Naomi saying that curriculum offered did not address women. She remembers the discussion becoming heated and Professor Washington saying the topic couldn't be handled at its present level.

"He said, 'we must bring it up to an intellectual level.' I said, 'preposterous. That's like telling us to separate what the body feels from the working of the mind. Is that how you tell your experience when you're among white faculty?"

For all the heat generated toward black women present that night, she remembers Cone, who was also present, receiving the bulk of it toward the end of the evening.

"Cone was arguing that women have a right to preach. That there's a strong tradition for it. He said black men oppressing black women were no better than white people oppressing black people." She remembers the men leaving in a hostile frame of mind.

Professor Cone also remembered that evening. When asked why he thought the men were so angry at him that night he said it was because he was a man, a minister saying this to them.

"I said it sharp. There was also tension between the faculty and the Caucus. I didn't know they (the men) were that reactionary. It was the most tension I've seen since I've been here. The black men saw me supporting the black women."

Also that school year Jackie Grant, a Ph.D student, Yolande Herron, an M.Div student and Professor Sam Roberts are said to have worked on a report dealing with black women's experiences in field placements. The report dealt with the discrimination and lack of support the women experienced. The Black Caucus resolved that spring that all job descriptions must be open to both men and women. Those not so designated would not be considered. It would seem that the report may have led to this resolution. The interviewee is not sure. She is sure that there was a report and the Caucus made that resolution.

September 1978. At the first Black Caucus meeting, a week on black preaching was proposed. Delores Williams, then a Ph.D. student at Union said it should be on black women. An M.Div. student present, Sharon Williams, remembers that people "fell out over something like the Black Symposium" the Caucus puts on now. She too remembers the issue was on black women preachers. She remembers Professor Forbes being present, "praying in the corner." After a heated discussion another interviewee said a committee was formed to study the issue and then report back to the Caucus.

The second issue to come up at the meeting was a job description that had come in to the Caucus that asked for a male to work with its congregation. It was the first job description to come in since the Caucus had resolved that job descriptions had to be

designated for males and females.

One of the M.Div men wanted to apply. One interviewee remembers him saying "just because the people don't want a woman he didn't see why he couldn't have the job." Again voices were raised. It is at this point that three interviewees remember two M.Div students, one male, one female, arguing. "I remember her saying something that he couldn't answer and he drew back his fist as if to hit her, but then remembered where he was." The interviewee recalls another woman present, Carol Gregory, jumping to her feet and other voices yelling at the man. The woman herself does not remember being aware that he appeared ready to hit her. "Other people saw it. I didn't see him trying to hit me." (Forbes doesn't recall this meeting in particular. "I tend to level anyway." he said. It seemed to him that there were at least three meetings dealing with the issue of men and women. He does remember "trying to pray our way back to unity" at one meeting but could not be sure if this September meeting was that meeting.) Someone then asked point blank if the men would support women in their attempts to find jobs. The answer given by one man was no. It was more important for black men to get the jobs and he would not risk his career, go out on a limb to help black women. It was after this meeting that the women met and seriously considered forming their own caucus.

It seemed to one interviewee that the women met at Delores' house within one to two weeks after that September meeting. Between then and October 25th when the Senate voted the Black Women's Caucus into existence, the women held several meetings. At these meetings some of the personal histories and events of previous

years were shared and discussed. The talk finally came around to what the women's next move should be. Should a caucus be formed or a support group? Would women participate in a caucus? What were the implications vis á vis white folks, black men? Some arguments put forward against the formation of a caucus were: 1) what the women really needed was support. Couldn't this need be handled without forming a separate organization; 2) it would split the black community; 3) it would not be a wise political move; 4) it would give whites an opportunity to drive a wedge between blacks; 5) people power and resources would be divided. Conversation went along these lines long enough for one interviewee to remember going to another Black Caucus meeting and being asked by the men what the women were going to do. She was the only woman present at the meeting. It seemed to her the women hadn't decided to form a caucus. "I remember saying we weren't going to have one and then boom, we had one."

The argument that won everyone over to forming a caucus as opposed to a support group was this: if you formed a caucus you would get money from the seminary and thus could do your own programming; e.g. have a forum on black women preachers.

Once it was decided to form a caucus the discussion centered on how to keep its formation as in house as possible. One woman remembers "we wanted to keep it to ourselves before publicizing it." Once all the preliminaries were taken care of "then we would go to the Black Caucus." One faculty spouse participating in these meetings expressed the concern that if the women went to the Black Caucus and they said no to the idea, it would be like

asking their permission. She did not see why they needed to tell the men anything. The argument that won out on this issue was that going to the men was not asking for permission but was a sign of courtesy, of respect for their feelings.

Union adopted the caucus system as a way for "minority" concerns to have an institutionalized vehicle by which they could express their concerns. By 1978 there were at least two caucuses: the Black Caucus and the Women's Caucus. A statement of purpose and a petition with twenty-five signatures is needed for any constituency at Union to form a caucus. The black women had workers, faculty spouses, student spouses and others to sign. Once the statement was written and the signatures gathered, it was decided that the time had come to tell the men what the women were going to do.

One woman remembers asking the president of the Black Caucus to call a meeting for that purpose, but it seemed to her that he was not hearing her. "I thought maybe it was me, so I asked Sharon to call him. I found out later that he had gone to Morin Bishop, chair of the Student Senate, and asked if the formation of the caucus were on the agenda and then asking how much money the women were going to get." Another woman said that it could not have been a complete surprise to the men. "Greg knew we had the petition. I think there was an explosion at the meeting because Greg didn't tell them what was going on. They must have thought we were coming for their support." Another woman remembers Professor Forbes talking to her in the hall one day and asking what the women were going to do. "He didn't want the black community divided. Really it was sexism in the community not being dealt with. They don't

want to hear strident voices of the oppressed, but they don't want you to leave either." Another woman felt "the men knew we were definite about forming a caucus, but they thought they could change our minds. Forbes was one of those who thought that." In any case, a special meeting was called for a Sunday evening.

One woman remembers joking on the way to the meeting. "Well whether they like it or not..." She said the feeling was the women wanted their support but didn't necessarily need it. She remembers the women were prepared to share with the men why they needed their own caucus, why they were doing it, and that it did not mean that the women were pulling away from the men. "I was expecting a dialogue. I was anxious for my daughter to see intelligent dialogue between graduate people." Another woman remembers the women going to the meeting with a supporting petition for the men to sign to show they were behind the formation of the caucus. The only person any of the interviewees remember signing the support petition was Professor Cornell West. One woman said he signed his name and put next to it "with reservation." Another woman remembers him signing and saying it was with reservation. I asked the other two professors who were present why they did not sign. Forbes felt the motivation for forming the caucus was wrong. Washington said he was against it forming because he felt it formed primarily over personality difficulties. In his mind separation only prolongs the problem. He cited the split between Progressive and National Baptists as an example of what he meant.

"There was a lot of anger and hostility in that room. There was no listening on either part." one woman said. "I was amazed at the level of maturity. Some felt they were punished for past bro-

thers' mistakes. The professors were concerned about the politics of separation. They understood the needs were not addressed but is it wise? White folks didn't know about it. One of the professors said this was not the time to do this. Someone said why couldn't there be a women's group inside the caucus. Forbes was nice and polite, but he was trying to stop it. Cornell agreed it was a bad time but he would support it with reservation. After that Sunday meeting I no longer went to any more meetings. There was too much negative energy that night."

"It was in the faculty lounge in the fall. Delores was there, Rose (Spaulding), Naomi (Franklin), Doris (Moore) and Rita (Williams) David Kelly, Washington, Greg Brown, Cornell, Forbes. One guy was real mad -- Elijah Green. He did a lot of talking. I had never participated in anything the Black Caucus did. The petition was already signed. We just went to tell them we were gonna be. (It was) a way to let them know before anyone else in the seminary.

"Elijah Green was real mad. He said things like 'we should be one, (you'll be) dividing us up. The attitude was you stay where you belong. You're a woman. I felt shattered because the sole purpose was to be a support group for women. There was so much anger. It was my first time seeing them in action. I guess it was my last. I was surprised at how men just think women shouldn't do stuff. They said we'd take money from them which isn't true. Women need support to help each other. We needed to be there for each other since there wasn't anyone else to go to."

Professor Forbes said he vaguely remembers the caucus coming into existence. He remembered wondering how things could have got-

ten so out of hand. Some of the arguments he remembered hearing against the formation of the caucus were: 1) it would divide the black men and women; 2) it would syphon off energies of black women for white feminist causes; 3) it would dilute the impact of black influence in the (Union) community; 4) it would make working relations for black women more difficult. He had a feeling that the issue of black men's insensitivity was raised but that was not the only reason given for the formation of the caucus. A woman present remembered, "We were told the community will know we're divided. Don't betray the brothers. Males are more oppressed than black women. A financial aid study had been done by Bob Broadwell, Union's financial aid officer. It showed Black males were receiving the most financial aid at Union.

"Washington was there. Forbes, West, Marvin Bentley, Greg Brown, Keith Cook, James Evans, David Kelly, Bob Thompson. Delores, Betty, Naomi, Hilda West (maybe). King's son was in town and someone introduced him. He didn't stay. Greg opened the meeting. Nothing was solved that evening. I remember going home with James Evans. There were undercurrents I didn't know about. We talked about the difference in community here and community at Yale. There it was more like an intellectual game, stimulating one another. There didn't seem to be this going at one another." The person remembered before coming to Union that she and her husband had been told to keep your business in the home. Union was a different community. "That night was definitely a learning experience."

On October 25th at 3:15, Morin Bishop called the Senate meeting to order. After discussing the divestment letter they were going to present at a Board of Trustees meeting that day, the Senate

approved its agenda. The Black Women's Caucus was the first order of business. Delores Williams presented the original petition and the statement of purpose. Ann Wyckoff, an M.Div student, and Richard Knox, a Ph.D student, were serving on the Senate at that time. Both were present at that meeting and recall the presentation. They remember Delores being very clear about the fact that forming their own caucus did not mean that the Black women were pulling away from the Black men.

"A question about duplication was asked. Delores said that there were needs Black women had that neither the Women's Caucus nor the Black Caucus could meet. It made sense."

Knox remembers that later in the school year and in the year that followed the caucus system was under attack because of the different constituencies coming to the Senate to form their own caucuses. Within two years the Senate would be revising its constitution. But at that October meeting Wyckoff does not remember any serious objections raised to the formation of the caucus, if there were any at all. After discussion and amending the first line of the statement of purpose, the Senate moved to establish the Black Women's Caucus. There were no abstentions.

Cherrill Wilson, a support staff person, was elected the caucus's first president. Money was allotted to the caucus and by the spring semester the Black Women's Caucus was ready for business.

IV. In Retrospect

Two quotes that stand out in my mind are the statement made by Professor Forbes as he wondered how things could have gotten so out of hand and another made by a graduate who felt faculty could have been more help in "calming people down, clarifying issues." Underlying both these statements is the assumption that somehow the rift which the formation of the Black Women's Caucus exposed was the major schism in the Black community at Union and that somehow the events of the Fall of 1978 could have been avoided.

I believe it is this underlying assumption that causes people to focus on personality conflicts and friction, on specific individuals as the cause for disunity in the Black community at Union. It is this assumption that supports the two myths I spoke of earlier in my statement of purpose on page 5. I will now show you why dealing with the formation of the Black Women's Caucus exposes them for the untruths they are.

The myths restated are: 1) The concerns of the Black community are represented by the Black Caucus; 2) The black community at Union is divided because of tensions between black men and black women; therefore, if we can resolve this tension we will have a united community.

One branch of argument put forward against the formation of the caucus was that it would divide the community, it would show the white community we are divided. This branch of argumentation assumes that: A) the community is not already divided; B) the white community would view the formation of the caucus as a negative development; C) the Black Caucus and the Black community are

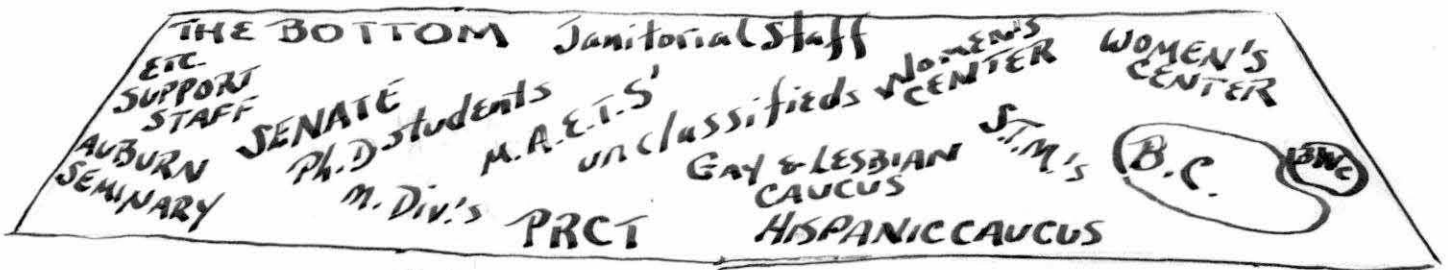
synonomous and D) the formation of the caucus would take resources away from the Black community.

A: The community isn't already divided

The picture this line of reasoning draws is this: You have a unified whole adequately represented by the Black Caucus. The Black Women's Caucus is viewed as a dissatisfied splinter group which breaks away from the Black community a.k.a. the Black Caucus to do its own things for its own selfish reasons or at the instigation of outside agitators (i.e. white feminists). If you were to diagram this it would look like this:

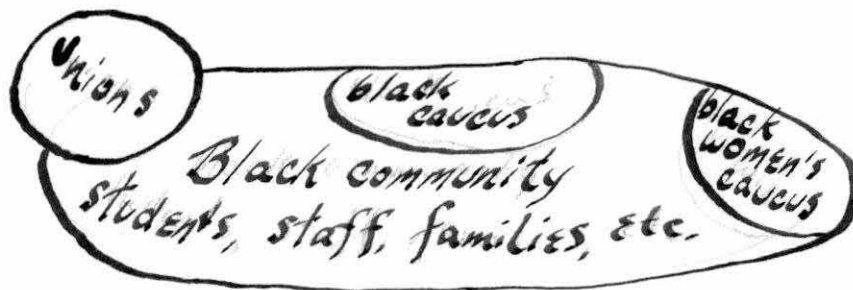


In my paradigm of the dinosaurs it would look like this:

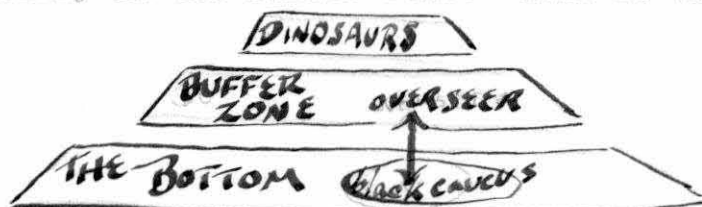


The Black Women's Caucus is thus viewed as another constituency vying along with the others in the Bottom for what resources are available to them all. This view does not acknowledge the fact that most of these constituencies overlap to form the Black community at Union. According to this view the Black Women's Caucus is seen splitting from the Black Caucus due to internal strife rather than an another mechanism used to respond to certain needs still not being addressed within the larger Black community context.

A picture, which if drawn would look like this:



Here the whole is the Black community (students, staff, families, etc. as well as Buffer Zone people and their families). These elements have needs to be addressed. Here different organizations form or are participated in so that the larger issues are addressed. For example, staff people need a union to do for them what a student organization never could and never should be expected to do for them. This reality however is not acknowledged by the Dinosaurs. They see only the Black Caucus which works through their intermediary in the Buffer Zone. This is what they see:



Although it does not appear to have started out as such, the Black Caucus over a period of years has become that "elite" I spoke of earlier in section II. All those who are "in" with the Overseer (i.e. receiving favors from this person) have their interests reflected by the Black Caucus. It is a matter of debate when this exactly took place because in the next section you will see that this "elite" was not always concentrated in the Black Caucus. It must also be said that just because someone attends Black Caucus meetings it is to be assumed automatically that person is a part of this "elite." In any case, what you have is the Elite and everybody else. This is where the Black community is and has been divided long before the Black Women's Caucus came into existence. If you're in the Elite, everything is cool. You get money, job

placements, recommendations. If you're not in the Elite, you don't count.

B: The white community would view the formation of the caucus as a negative development.

The question that arises from this statement is "which white community?" Interviewing white students for this thesis, the consensus among them was 1) now the Blacks have two sources of money -- a view one black professor said was romantic; 2) the white women thought it was great. Obviously the white students are not the white community argument B is addressing. It has to be a community that would view the formation of the caucus as a split, a weakening of a power base. The white community being considered here is the Dinosaurs. They would be glad for the formation of the Black Women's Caucus. Ostensibly it might mean the weakening of the overseer's power base. It might mean there are two camps (or so they think) that they can play off of each other for crumbs. The Dinosaurs, however, still relate to the Black Caucus and the Overseer as representative of the Black community. One black professor said they see it "not as representative, but significant; i.e. this is the body that must be addressed.

The Black Caucus has seats on every standing committee of the Senate. Views from a Ph.D student involved in Senate politics said, "Whenever the Seminary says minority representation, they mean Black Caucus. The Black Caucus fills that slot for the Administration." Another black professor listed areas of mutual concern that he felt the Black Caucus needed to be addressing: recruiting, placement of graduates, financial aid, faculty appointments, curriculum and community relations -- Black community at Union to Black

community outside Union. He said, "We're not organized to respond to the perpetual crisis that the Black community is in." One issue he used as an example was the closing of Sydenham Hospital on 124th Street and Saint Nicholas Avenue. According to him not one word came forth from the Black community at Union on that issue. "The closing of a major hospital in a Black neighborhood (within walking distance of the school) and we had nothing to say." Along the same lines an M.Div. student active in Reverend Herbert Daughtry's Black United Front (a black political organization located in Brooklyn) asked me why Black students weren't more involved in the UTS Soup Kitchen. An alumnae interviewed said, "The Black Caucus was supposed to be involved in recruiting, it never got a grip on Black life issues at the Seminary."

Of course individuals can give reasons why they aren't involved in the Soup Kitchen, all legitimate. And poor leadership in the Black Caucus could be and has been cited as the Black Caucus' problem. But the question and the two statements point to the overall mindset of Union: academics come first, which, if you think about it makes sense. Union is after all a school; first, last and always Union is a school. This puts human needs in general on a back burner. The Seminary did not protest the closing of Sydenham Hospital. The UTS Soup Kitchen exists because of student and staff. The Seminary claims it in fund raising letters it sends to alumni/ae and churches. For the academic year of 1982-83 the Soup Kitchen was allotted \$150. This for a Soup Kitchen established to feed the hungry in the Morningside area.

So long as academics are what is foremost in the Dinosaurs' minds, producing Ph.D's (not unimportant things to be sure) there

is no systematic effort to deal with outside issues (i.e. if people are interested, an issue will be raised. Once they go, so does the concern) or internal conflicts (e.g. students dealing with stress). With this view one can see that only particular students count and therefore when this mindset is transferred to the Black community, the Black community becomes synonymous with the Black Caucus. Non-students don't count.

C: The Black community is synonymous with the Black Caucus

D: The formation of the Black Women's Caucus would take resources away from the Black community

In the 1981-82 school year the support staff of Union decided to join a Union. Only one black professor openly supported their efforts. The Black Women's Caucus sent a letter to the president of the Seminary when asked to by Betty Bolden. I wrote the letter and the black women were behind it. A black woman at the meeting where the letter was read and approved asked a question something along the lines of "Would someone tell me when it is not in the best interests of black people to support a union?" She then recounted what happened at a Black Caucus meeting when a similar action was to be taken. (Support staff were asking all student bodies to write a letter supporting their efforts). She said she couldn't believe the level of argumentation writing a letter in support of a union had caused. Now if these incidents are not viewed against the "academics-come-first" mindset of Union one is apt to leap to the conclusion that the individuals of the Black Women's Caucus are more enlightened or caring than those of the Black Caucus, which in some instances may be the case, but does not speak to what is actually going on. In the mind of this

writer historically Black people have benefited from unions (e.g. A. Phillip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Pullman Porters). Since many of the support staff at Union are black, it follows that you support their efforts to join a union. But if certain members of an organization see that their overseer has not taken a particular course of action, how readily are they going to act? And if they do act, they are going to be sure that their actions are not misconstrued; i.e. seen as going against the overseer.

As to argument D, of all the caucuses at Union, the Black Caucus had received the most money from the Student Activities fees dispensed by the Seminary Life Office. In the 1982-83 school year it ranked third behind the Women's Center and Balaam's Ass, the school newspaper. Black women have continued to participate in Black Caucus activities and attend Black Caucus meetings. In fact in 1979-80 Sandy Wilson, an M.Div woman, was elected president of the Black Caucus.

Given this representation of Union's situation, trying to dialogue between black men and black women will address only one thing: the chauvanistic socialization of black males and how it is manifested in the seminary. An important issue which must be addressed, not just at Union but elsewhere. In time it might even lead to policy that is adhered to, continually developed, reviewed and reinforced. The example of the Caucus deciding not to consider job descriptions that did not apply equally to men and women was a very good start. But it in no way addresses the reality presented by the overseer and the control this person has in the Seminary. I submit that because this basic underlying

tension, the real source of division in the Black community has never been addressed things got, as Professor Forbes put it, "so out of hand."

In one instance a white Ph.D student admired the way the most recent overseer takes care of his Ph.D students. He felt that his "mentors" could take a lesson from this person. "He gives them deadlines, tells them what they need to do, makes sure they're seen at different conferences. He takes care of them." True enough. But this is an instance where the overseer is a refuge. Ideally one wants all students to be "taken care of." But this should be the job of the seminary, not just of one faculty person. It is because of the "academics-first" mindset that the Seminary does not "take care" of all students nor see itself responsible for taking care of all students; therefore, the dynamic of overseer is able to arise and can be a powerful force, for good or ill, in this instance in the lives of black people (in particular students) at the Seminary.

It is against this backdrop and the 1970's that the personal histories and events of section V are played out.

V. 1973 - 1983: Personal Histories and Events

In 1973 there were eight black women studying at Union in one degree program or another. Kathleen Jamerson was a black woman hired in the Dean of Seminary Life's office.

"She never took a position on black women's needs. She'd call meetings and interpret policy to us. Needs were voiced but not attended to. One black woman was being sexually harassed by a black tutor. She and another woman went to the professor, Paul Lehman, and complained.

"I don't know if they were clear on exactly what was happening when they spoke to him. This tutor would not give Vinetta her grade unless she slept with him. Frances Williams, an M.Div. student, said she should have felt honored to be asked." In any case the professor did get on the tutor's case but Vinetta still didn't get a grade. The same complaint was made about the same tutor by white women.

"Black faculty was incredibly sexist. I never got a grade from one black tutor who I refused to go out with. One day some of us were sitting in the Women's Center talking and realized quite a few of us didn't get a grade from this same tutor." Each of the women she said had experienced a similar type of propositioning.

A black woman recalled, "Vinetta didn't get her grade. She left Union believing nothing good would happen for black women at Union."

That same semester another black student raped a black seminari-

an. He was working as an intern at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Brooklyn. One black woman remembers the police went to the church to arrest him. He was taken down to the Tombs.

"Vinetta, Sid Skirvin and Kathleen went with her to the arraignment. She was working for a law firm at the time. The case didn't come to trial." The belief was that she was paid off to drop the charges.

"Lawrence Jones, black dean of students, called me, Vinetta, Carol and Jackie into his office. He wanted to know what we knew about the incident, trying to see if she had brought it on herself. Some details were shared: that they had gone for some study notes he had. One person mentioned that he had thrown darts at her vagina. But nothing incriminating was revealed.

"They were trying to get her to leave. After that first time some of the women were called in separately with the same intention. E. went to Brooke Mosley, president of the seminary at the time, who said of course she could stay. She finished up the year and transferred to Howard law school."

"Arguments would constantly flare up on women's issues at Black Caucus meetings." The speaker remembered trying to get one woman elected president.

"I can't remember how we found out the slate was all male but we did. We caucused and got Vinetta's name nominated from the floor. Frank Brown was on our side. We lost by one vote. E. voted against us." Bobby Joe Saucer, a black recruiter, was

at the meeting, making a big speech for the all male slate.

"We (the women) said black faculty is not supposed to be here." It didn't matter. He was allowed to remain.

"Some of the men used to talk about the black women. They said Carol was 'loose.'" One tutor lied about me to Vinetta." The harrassment got to be so bad that she had to go home and didn't return until 1978.

"Carol got a lawyer. She called me up and I told her to go to the Women's Caucus for protection."

One woman remembers the Women's Center doing a lot of support things at this time: "pot lucks, conciousness raising groups. She remembers the caucus not being very outreach oriented, "geared to this institution." A general picture of how men felt about women at Union was felt by one black woman to be summed up in a chapel service held one fall. A white woman student remembers it this way:

"I think it was the fall of '74. Calvin Butts was preaching in James chapel. He attacked feminism as a white women's movement. He said 'your women lust after one another.' I don't know why he said it. The sermon was on the moral deterioration of white culture. It was a hell-fire sermon, very judgmental. Sarah Darter walked out. I didn't. I was used to ~~not~~ arguing with black men in public. Cone was sexist in class but he was being put down by white students for Black Theology. I didn't want to confuse the issue (by bringing up sexism).

"We accepted what black women were saying to us: 'The struggle we face is with our brothers. Don't lay your interpretations on our community.' White feminists didn't want to fight the blacks."

According to her sexual harrassment was prevalent at Union. "One white male student was a peeping Tom. He would peep at the women as they were taking their showers."

A black woman who came in 1974 remembered her first Black Caucus meeting.

"Jackie (Grant) and I were the only women present. I remember I.T.C. fondly, I was 'one of the boys'. At the first meeting I was asked to defend why God could call a woman. I had not experienced sexism. I would feel sorry for those Yale and Harvard women trying to raise our (I.T.C. women's) conciousness. I was surprised and I was already ordained. I felt if this is the kind of community this is, I won't go.

"The men of '74 were macho and let you know it, no shame in behavioral attitudes about male supremacy. One of them abused his wife and children." She remembered Sid Skirvin having to be called in. She remembered another man saying 'I just need a wife' that's why he got married.

"Men now are different or more discreet. The white Women's Caucus was very strong in '74. They talked about being told to be good little girls and respectable, housing problems for people in McGiffert, about people being destroyed by the ordination process. They talked about how they could be support. There was real caring in that room. I was surprised. I wasn't patronized. No co-opting

like white women around in '78." The attitude she felt from these later women she described as "Come bless our business with your presence." The women in '74 were still hurting enough not to say I don't have a right to my struggle. You were welcome but it was clearly their agenda.

"I remember telling Jill Thompson I felt accepted by whites. I never thought I'd be more at home in a white community than black.

"In the spring of '75 Jackie would call a meeting, we (black women would talk about organizing in some official way. Someone would always bring up the term lesbianism. We were clearly saying we didn't want to be white women, but didn't know how to name ourselves.

"Different things would call us together. We'd meet in the Women's Center or somebody's apartment, mostly for fellowship."

By 1976 this person would experience muscle spasms when she entered the building.

"I felt destroyed limb by limb." Landes wouldn't sign for a grant she needed. "He said I hadn't crossed any hurdles. I was pastoring a church, I never handed anything in late. But it seemed to him I didn't know what I wanted to do.

"It seemed like no one would say it was 90% political, nobody was decoding the mysteries of the process. No one told me pastoring an East Harlem church would keep you from getting a degree." Pastoring she explained is not considered academic.

"The institution didn't know what to do with us (black Ph.D students). There was no comprehension that we'd want to do things differently. They were asking students to do white stuff. Samuel Terrien, an Old Testament professor, said we'd automatically lower the standards. (Professor Cone remembers that remark and answered him, "I don't lower the standards of the faculty, though some of you do.") Everybody who could preach got a church." Her experience with Saucer was positive. "He was responsible for me being here." Lawrence Jones, on the other hand, made her feel she was "too dark for him." Money had been sent to her from a black church in Harlem and Jones told her she was living beyond her means.

"Black women were brought in every now and then to teach. Always the white community wanted more from black women; no respect for basic humanity."

In '74 Cone still riding high as "the" scholar. He was on the committee that interviewed you for funds. I could see there was a connection between money, Cone and the larger community. If white professors were having problems with my papers they went to Cone. White faculty didn't have to deal with their own racism because they had Cone to call them on it all the time.

"Cone didn't like everyone accepted (at Union) and everyone didn't like him. I don't think he has the power he used to.

"I wouldn't recruit for Union. There's so little love here, so little respect. It's dog eat dog."

James Cone came to Union the Fall of 1969, a year after the takeover of the Administration building which resulted in the forma-

tion of the Black Economic Development Fund. A fund of approximately one million dollars was donated to help economic development in the Black community. It was to be administered by Black alumni and ended up being administered by Black faculty and students. One of the projects funded by it was the Southwest Georgia project in 1971.

"By 1972-73 a decision was made to use money for student scholarship." According to Cone, this is when tension began to develop between Black faculty and the Black Caucus. He felt "faculty wanted to be told back, students wanted to spend. There was a time when black faculty knew little of what was going on in the Black Caucus. Cain Felder helped bring faculty and the Caucus back together when he came back to do his Ph.D" Working together Cone (at that point the only black faculty person) and the Black Caucus got the Afro-American position once held by Jones and the Sociology and Religion position held by C. Eric Lincoln reopened.

"If faculty don't have student constituency, they can't make changes on their own. If faculty and Caucus are saying the same thing, the base is stronger."

Jackie Grant asked if Cone would give his lecture on women in ministry, Newstyles of Ministry, to the Caucus. Washington and Forbes remember this meeting. It took place in Room 214.

Washington was "shocked." Sandy Martin, a male Ph.D student, was "conservative as hell. I couldn't believe some of the things coming out of his mouth." Cone remembers this occurring 76-'77. Forbes '77-78. None of the professors were prepared for the men

being reactionary. Washington remembers speaking to Martin and the other professors speaking to him on different occasions. In the '76-77 year black women are said to have stopped going to Black Caucus meetings.

"Yolande said Sandy Martin was quoting scriptures stating why women couldn't preach."

A study being done on women at Union had a group of black women interviewed to find out what they felt black women needed at Union.

"L. stormed out of the room in a huff saying, 'we don't air our dirty linen in public.' one woman remembered. "I stayed. We wanted role models, relevant curriculum." Remembering L. she said "She was one of the women to have a nervous breakdown." Within the five years between 1973 - 1978 five women had nervous breakdowns or tried to commit suicide.

"It seemed like it was one after another. You'd go away at the end of a school year only to come back and find another one gone. And not until later in the term did you hear what happened."

Another woman commenting on L. said, "I don't know why she had hers. She was brilliant. From California. She just went down hill. Stopped taking baths. David Rupe, (a white male) tried to look out for her. If there was any male support, it was from white men."

1978. "The first year the caucus formed we had a workshop by some women on money, the staff luncheon and Michelle Wallace in the spring."

One Ph.D. student remembers the event. "It was well attended, whites as well as blacks. The Old Gym was three-quarters full. Cornell was teaching on Philosophy and the Afro American experience." People remember Cornell helping to bring her to Union. "There was a reception for her at Cornell's afterward.

"Whites there out of curiosity, came to get the inside dope. Someone asked why she had to write that book (Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman). Couldn't it (the issue) be dealt with within the community? It came up again at the reception, 'airing dirty linen.'" With the formation of the Black Women's Caucus still fairly recent, attempts were being made to heal some wounds. This student remembers Forbes being asked to referee a dialogue between black woman and men. An alumnae set up a counseling session with East Harlem Interfaith counselors Doris and Fred Dennard.

"Only four people showed up: Greg, Cecil Prescod, Delores and myself. I remember shuttling between the two caucuses. Once the Black Women's Caucus was formed, I was determined that both caucuses would survive. Doris asked 'Why save it?' (the Black Caucus). I couldn't give her an answer. 'Then maybe it should die.' she said. In '79-'80 it was almost all female leadership of Black Caucus, Men refused to participate. Linda would report to me things they said like 'the women have taken over.' People wouldn't follow through on things. Neither caucus was doing anything."

The two caucuses did get together the '79-'80 school year to put together a testimonial dinner for Forbes. He was coming up for tenure and it was done to show how the Black community felt about him.

Forbes recalls, "It was held in the Refectory in the evening of the day before the vote was to be taken. It was audacious enough to intimidate. I feel it was timed to do just that. It felt like a pastor's aide banquet." They presented him with a plaque after former students and present colleagues of his gave tribute to him. One of the women instrumental in setting it up said, "It was done before the vote. That way if a certain person voted against him, we'd know about it."

The spring semester of '80 a student recalls "an attempt was being made to control the black Caucus by Cummings maneuvering to become president of the Black Caucus.

That fall I enrolled at Union. At my first Senate meeting the issue arose: can a caucus exist if there aren't twenty-five participating members in it. One of the senators had been made aware that an attempt to put an end to the Black Women's Caucus was underway.

"Two black women stopped me in the hall in the Rotunda and were sharing with me what they thought was going to happen. I was very aware of being a white male in that situation and wondering how to come into the situation without being racist." When the concern about caucus membership and participation was brought up by the president of the Black Caucus, the senator was ready for him. The upshot of the discussion was that participating membership did not have to mean the twenty-five people who signed a caucus' petition.

Also that year several students wanted to go to the All

Africa Conference taking place in August 1981. It seemed to be going all right until the final stages when one faculty's presence terminated it.

"Why is it we in the black community cannot be supportive of projects, issues, programs, which might not be our baby? " one student who was participating in the project said. "On the part of some of the students there was an under the table conniving to promote that person's ego."

I remember that Africa project. The failure of that project and my experiences that first semester had me resolve not to have anything to do with the Black Caucus. I threw my energies into the Black Women's Caucus the following year. We had a Black Women Speak Forum; two speakers in the fall and two in the Spring. Some women were able to go to different conferences with the money allotted us and a second issue of the Black Women's Caucus newsletter appeared. I did not attend any Black Caucus meetings until the end of the year and then because I had been invited. They voted at that meeting to make the convenor of the Black Women's Caucus a member of the Black Caucus' executive board. I had heard that at one meeting an African priest, Joseph Motsumi, told the president of the Caucus he owed the sisters present an apology for his rudeness to them. An apology that never really came. The Black Symposium that year was on Black Women and the Church. It was what I considered to be an appeasement gesture because nothing has changed. The experiences of this year's Black Women's Caucus convenor bears this out.

"Language is inadequate as a means of communication.

For example, if I say I cannot go to a meeting on a Friday evening and am part of the executive board of the Caucus, yet every meeting is held on a Friday evening, language is inadequate." A similar scenario was played out when she shared with the executive board that most of the black women who are commuters would not be on campus on the day they decided to hold Black Caucus meetings. It was decided that Wednesday was still the best time to hold Black Caucus meetings. On not being asked to participate in anything during the Black Caucus week of chapel she said,

"I tried calmly to show the chaplain of the Black Caucus that in a political frame of reference it was very unwise to bypass a person with a title (leader of a group). No matter how I phrased it, I was told I was taking it personally. I was coming at it from organizational, political reality, Pastors recognize everybody. I was told I was taking it as a personal offense, that God is not involved in politics. They just wanted to glorify God. I was angry for the Black women here. Their leadership was ignored.

"At an executive board meeting I proposed a title for the Symposium, I became acutely aware it was a preset thing, they were not going to listen to my input. One man did try to get them to listen. He too saw the other four men were not open. I didn't know about the hidden agenda. One person (C. Eric Lincoln) was coming at all costs."

She was also given a hard time on paying the woman who was to speak. She said, "The president of the caucus said 'we're not going to pay Cheryl Gilkes the same money as Lincoln because Dean Gatch is having problems with it.' I didn't say a word. The

next day I was in Gatch's office and asked him if there were any stipulations on how the money for the Symposium was to be spent. He said none. I told Josiah, 'You'll be so happy to hear. Dean Gatch has no problem with how the money for the Symposium is spent.' These and other slights caused her to say, "We have little clones. They're like the Stepford Wives. There's an intense need of community that includes and does not/is not self-deceptive." She said she had "illusions of a 'religious' community being able to arrive at accord. There's always wrestling with issues. You're supposed to wrestle until you receive a blessing. The wrestling gets stifled somewhere along the line. I'm afraid it's stifled by faculty."

VI. Implications for Black Women in Ministry

Unfortunately what has been chronicled in section V in this thesis is only the tip of the iceberg. At conferences I have attended for women in ministry, private talks I have had with sisters working in other churches and attending other seminaries reveal the same hurts, disappointments. My first semester here I attended an interseminarian's conference for women held here at Union. In one of the workshops I attended Linda Thomas and I were speaking to the need to form coalitions with whoever was willing to form them with us. In this instance I was talking about white women. Two other sisters from two other seminaries were saying they didn't want to do anything that would alienate their brothers. But all four of us knew that whatever our stance was on coalitions, we would have to be one another's support when we got on the outside. Networking within the seminary we attend and with sisters

in those seminaries we don't is vital. It is a skill that black women must develop if we are to survive. Learning how to support one another is another skill we need to learn: how to support one another and how to support ourselves. Five black women tried to kill themselves because they couldn't support themselves in the face of other people deciding 'you don't count. I do.' This type of "survival learning" must be reflected in the curriculum we are taught. How to detect the kind of informal politicking that goes on in the structures we operate in is another must. Sharing our histories is another. We learn from others experiences. Knowing Lillian Anthony or Pauli Murray survived being the only black women on their seminary campuses can help a black women who will be the only black woman in her Presbytery, in her conference pastoring full time, in her agency.

Knowing our history is another must. Not just in one area but all areas. To know where the women were, where they are, where they need to be can help us to pace ourselves, mark out realistic goals, instill new dreams in the sisters coming behind us. They can help us to set our own priorities, not keep allowing others to set them for us; to keep getting away with the claim that we don't think for ourselves because we don't think their way. We must know how to turn off the old tape that tells us to volunteer when we hear the word "sacrifice." I think this can only be turned around if we start focusing on what it means to be a woman doing what we're doing where we're doing it in a woman's way as opposed to a man's way.

VII. Concluding Remarks

I can't tell what the future holds for the Black Women's Caucus. I don't see it going away anytime soon. Some of the interviewees listed a few hopes for it: that it push for curriculum dealing with black women's experience, help recruit more women from integrated denominations, work toward and on the problems of other black women (i.e. the women we will be serving), deal with modeling on how to deal with aggressive men, be something for wives (e.g. provide for family counseling), start doing bigger things to show we're doing something. All commendable but only capable of coming true if black women are committed to black women. I know that as a soon to be graduate this project has given me two goals already: 1) to find as many of the Black women who went to and who graduated from this school in whatever degree program and form a Black Women's Alumnae Association; 2) To sit down with all the information I have gathered that did not appear in this thesis, conduct more interviews and publish this.

In the more immediate future I have every intention of keeping in touch with the women who remain here and helping them as one person expressed "to remain true to ourselves and let us function as a group without any faculty representation; we don't do something just because black faculty want us to do something; we are support for black women, not a political tool for black faculty." Amen.

VIII. Appendices

LIST OF CONVENORS: BLACK WOMEN'S CAUCUS



1. Cherrill Wilson
1978 - 1979
Accounts Payable clerk



2. Delores Williams
1979 - 1980
Ph.D student in Ethics



3. Linda Thomas
1980 - 1981
M.Div. student, middler



4. Anna Taylor
1981 - 1982
M. Div. student, middler



5. Julia Quinlan
1982 - 1983
M. Div. student, middler

Primary Sources:

1. Delores Williams - Jan. 25, 1983 her apartment
Feb. 26, 1983 (follow up interview)
2. Sharon Williams - Jan. 26, 1983 2:45 Teacher's College
3. Emily Gibbs - Feb. 7, 1983 3:00 New York Theological Seminary
4. Richard Knox - Feb. 7, 1983 10:00 Union Seminary
5. Katie Canon - Feb. 17, 1983 12:00 Union Refectory
Feb. 22, 1983 (follow up interview)
6. Betty Bolden - Feb. 23, 1983 6:00 her apartment
7. Mildred Brown - Feb. 15, 1983 1:00 her office 475 Riverside Dr.
8. Elizabeth Mellen - Feb. 22, 1983 2:45 Room 305 UTS
9. James Forbes - March 11, 1983 9:00 his office UTS
10. Sarah Bentley - March 15, 1983 12:30 her office Auburn Seminary
11. Julia Quinlan - March 17, 1983 5:00 Black Caucus Room UTS
12. James Cone - March 21, 1983 11:30 his office UTS
13. Jame Washington - March 23, 1983 10:40 his office UTS
14. Winston Thompson - March 23, 1983 1:00 his apartment
15. Doris Moore - March 23, 1983 7:34 Van Dusen Hall switchboard
16. Ann Wyckoff
17. Bob Heinle